



Routledge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Philosophy

HEGEL AND THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL

Edited by
Paul Giladi



Hegel and the Frankfurt School

This collection of original essays discusses the relationship between Hegel and the Frankfurt School Critical Theory tradition. The book's aim is to take stock of this fascinating, complex, and complicated relationship. The volume is divided into five parts: Part I focuses on dialectics and antagonisms. Part II is concerned with ethical life and intersubjectivity. Part III is devoted to the logico-metaphysical discourse surrounding emancipation. Part IV analyses social freedom in relation to emancipation. Part V discusses classical and contemporary political philosophy in relation to Hegel and the Frankfurt School, as well as radical-democratic models and the outline and functions of economic institutions.

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Edited by Paul Giladi

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Foreword

When Paul Giladi first asked me to contribute to this very interesting and timely volume, I had just finished writing a long essay entitled “Hegel and the Frankfurt School” for *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel*, which focused on the diverse ways Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse respectively interpreted Hegel’s philosophy and also selectively appropriated aspects of Hegel’s philosophy in the development of their own views.¹ I felt I had little more to say on the subject. Having read this excellent collection of essays, I realise how wrong I was. There was much more to say and that I could have said on the topic.

Reading the fine contributions to this volume alerted me to a theme that draws the various essays together and throws a new complexion on its topic, “Hegel and the Frankfurt School”. That theme is the *actuality* of Hegel’s philosophy. “Actuality” (*Wirklichkeit*), as readers of this book will know, is a technical term in Hegel’s system. Perhaps the most famous use of it occurs in the Preface to the 1820 lectures on the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*: “What is rational, is actual; and what is actual, is rational”.

Hegel’s *Doppelsatz*, as it is known, is a not unintentionally gnomic formulation, which was written by Hegel when under threat of severe censorship, laid down in the Carlsbad decrees, following the assassination of the poet Kotzebue by the student Karl Ludwig Sand. Draconian censorship was directed towards university students and faculty and towards publications of political ideas in particular.² We can see this by comparing the *Doppelsatz* of 1820 with a correlative passage from §134, 157 of Hegel’s 1817/1818 lectures on the philosophy of right: “The national spirit is substance. What is rational, must happen, inasmuch as the constitution in general is its (the national spirit’s) development”.

The latter passage, unlike the former, clarifies Hegel’s view about the necessity for progressive politics. Hegel knew that he could not smuggle such ideas past the censors in that form. As Manfred Riedel notes, Hegel did not change his views in response to the censors; he disguised them.³

Though people in Hegel’s circle of acquaintance knew about these amendments, many of his readers did not. Eduard Gans, in his

introduction to Volume 8 of the “Freundeskreis” edition of Hegel’s works, published in 1833 shortly after Hegel’s death, complains that “misunderstandings and false interpretations” have not only turned the German public against Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, but wrongly portrayed it as a “servile book”.⁴

To Hegel’s own great consternation, due in part to the gnomic double dictum, contemporary readers misunderstood Hegel’s text, his political theory, and his political views they inferred from it. This misunderstanding persisted for decades. Hegel was widely criticised for being a reactionary defender of the *status quo*, and in particular of the Prussian state right up to World War II and beyond, as if his double dictum was another version of the thought in Alexander Pope’s theodicy: “One truth is clear: Whatever is, is right”.⁵

Among the last things Hegel wrote, shortly before his death in 1831, were clarifications designed to overturn such misunderstandings. In §6 of the 1830 version of *Encyclopaedia Logic*, Hegel states that, in general, existence (*Dasein*) is in part “appearance” and only in part “actuality”:

In common life, it happens that almost any occurrence, error, evil and such things, along with even the most paltry and transient existence are called ‘reality’ (*Wirklichkeit*).

(EL §6; Werke: 10, 48)

But that is wrong, Hegel explains, because such things only have the value of something that is merely possible, which is not able to be as good as it is. Whereas, by contrast, the realities that deserve the name “*Wirklichkeit*” truly are because they have instantiated and embodied the fully developed idea of what they are. The “actuality of reason” is set against two opposed but equally mistaken kinds of representative thinking: that ideas and ideals are chimeras and figments of the brain; and that ideas and ideals are “something far too excellent to have actuality” or alternatively that “they are far too important to constitute reality for themselves”.⁶

So, this is what “actuality”, in Hegel’s technical sense, means. A good way to understand the writings of the various members of the Frankfurt School on Hegel is to see them as “actualizations” of Hegel’s philosophy, in this very sense. They *renew* Hegel’s work by making it relevant to the present, they *illuminate* it and give us reasons, often new ones, to engage with it. And the various essays in this volume, some more explicitly than others, attend to the ways in which Frankfurt School thinkers, from Friedrich Pollock and Theodor Adorno to Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth, actualise aspects of Hegel’s philosophy. I do not claim this to be an original insight of mine. Far from it. It is a methodological tenet in Honneth (2000, 2010, 2014), where he explicitly presents his work on Hegel as a “reactualization”. And the topic of reactualisation is discussed

in detail in James Gledhill's excellent essay on Honneth's and Habermas's work as contrasting "reactualizations" of Hegel in this volume.

We can develop this idea further, by construing "actualization" – and its cognates "actualize," "actualization" – in the light of Hegel's technical term "actuality", with the caveat that Hegel's conception of *Wirklichkeit*, like much of his terminology, is inseparable from his teleological conception of absolute spirit. Still, even when Honneth's notion of "actualization" is given broader construal than Hegel's (one shorn of Hegel's speculative metaphysics), the idea of a "reactualization" of Hegel is itself, nevertheless, broadly consistent with Hegel's approach to philosophy. In fact, it is itself a "reactualization" of Hegel's idea of actuality. This is true whether the "actualization" in question attempts to provide a "historical-sociological" substitute for Hegel's speculative metaphysical system, in the manner of Honneth, or, a "philosophical-juridical" one, which Gledhill attributes to Habermas.

The second way in which I want to develop this line of thought is by drawing a distinction. The process of reactualisation can take on two distinct forms: *interpretations* of Hegel on the one hand, and *appropriations* of Hegel on the other. And anyone interested in the topic of this book, Hegel and the Frankfurt School, has to consider both carefully. And when they do, I suggest they will find that the number of *actualising appropriations* of Hegel outdoes the number of *actualising interpretations* by some margin.

That is partly because Frankfurt School theorists construct their theories with the aim of reflecting on, and in some cases, of changing, present social reality. They were neither intellectual historians, nor strictly speaking philosophers – but philosophically informed social theorists. It is striking that in spite of their preoccupation with Hegel, the Frankfurt School theorists produced between them surprisingly few scholarly studies of Hegel's philosophy. Herbert Marcuse's 1932 study *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*, and his *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (first edition in 1941) are notable exceptions, along with three early essays by Habermas. Note that while Adorno's *Hegel: Three Studies* comprises three essays on Hegel, none of these are scholarly studies on Hegel. Not so much because they are not scholarly – Adorno scarcely ever consults any of the secondary literature – but because they are, as he himself claims, preliminary studies for his own conception of negative dialectic.⁷

Compare these three essays with the three essays in Habermas's *Theorie und Praxis*, which were published in the same year, 1963, and the difference in scholarliness, historical accuracy, and nuance is glaring. In contrast to Habermas, Adorno does not even mention Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution*, although he does appear in places to allude to and endorse Marcuse's view, as he does Max Horkheimer's interpretations of Hegel.⁸ Suffice it to say that Adorno's *Hegel: Three Studies* is not a

book one would include on a reading list for a course on Hegel, since, interesting though it is, it does not give students a reliable understanding of Hegel's philosophy.

Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution* is paradigmatic of what I call an "actualizing interpretation of Hegel". To see this, one has only to pose the questions: "Which Hegel is Being Actualized?"; and "To What End"? Indeed, it is always helpful to ask these questions, whenever one engages with work on Hegel, whether by Frankfurt School theorists or not.⁹ In this case, it is the radical, reforming, and progressive Hegel, whose ideas of reason and freedom, he argues, contained an ideal of a better society that was unrealisable in his time. Marcuse wanted to distance Hegel's philosophy, including the *Philosophy of Right*, from the misleading interpretations that painted it from its inception, *via* the Young Hegelians and Rudolf Haym to Leonard Hobhouse and Karl Popper, as a servile apology for what exists, and an exaltation of the Prussian state. Marcuse also wanted to throw light on Hegel's relation to Marxism, in the wake of the recent discovery of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, and the consequent rekindling of philosophical interest in the Hegelian origins of Marx's dialectic.

If one looks at the interpretations of Hegel's philosophy from a certain distance, beneath the differences between them, one can discern at least two unifying tendencies. First, they tend to contrast the young, radical Hegel with progressive politics, a strong anti-clerical stance, and Republican sympathies, with an older, conservative Hegel in the thrall of his own absolute idealism. As György Lukács did in *The Young Hegel*, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is generally seen as the point of transition between the young and the old Hegel. Second, they tend to follow Marx, in reading Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, and what they see as Hegel's quietist, or conservative politics as an excrescence of his logic:

Hegel's true interest is not the philosophy of right but logic. The task of philosophy is not to understand how thought can be embodied in political determinations but to dissolve the existing political determinations into abstract ideas. The concern of philosophy is not the logic of the subject-matter but the subject-matter of logic.¹⁰

Broadly speaking, the interpretations of Hegel offered by Horkheimer, Adorno, and Habermas follow this pattern.

Of course, not all Hegel interpretations are "actualizing"; certainly not all those advanced by the Frankfurt School theorists. Interpretations that aim to ground their understanding of Hegel in a historically anchored context, whether intellectual or social and political, and which present the value of understanding and engagement with Hegel as largely a matter of historical interest, are not actualising ones. We can call such

“non-actualizing” interpretations, to continue the Hegelian theme, “existing” interpretations. We need not, and perhaps should not, just because we are writing about Hegel, share Hegel’s *parti pris* for actuality over mere existence. We can afford to be methodological pluralists about interpretation. The important thing about “existing interpretations” in this sense is that they are grounded in the historical reality of the interpreted work, its author, and its context.

Now, let us consider what I call the “actualizing *appropriations*” of Hegel. As I just noted, the Frankfurt School theorists’ engagement with Hegel mainly takes the form of appropriations. (In this volume, we have the examples of Pollock, Honneth, and Habermas.) Appropriators of Hegel set out to update Hegel and to develop aspects of his theory with different conceptual tools, like Habermas and Honneth respectively in different ways develop Hegel’s theory of *Sittlichkeit* and idea of intersubjective recognition.

For instance, in the essay “Labour and Interaction: Remarks on Hegel’s Jena Philosophy of Mind”, Habermas identifies and lays out what he sees as Hegel’s early alternative intersubjective theory of the “formative process of the spirit”, which was subsequently abandoned in favour of subject-object paradigm required in the later system.¹¹ As Habermas writes: “[a] radicalisation of my thesis would read ‘it is not the spirit in the absolute movement of reflecting on itself which manifest itself in . . . language, labour and moral relationships’, but rather it is the dialectical interconnections between linguistic symbolisation, labour and interaction which determine the concept of spirit”.¹² In other words, he wants to appropriate and build on Hegel’s early intersubjective conception of spirit, while distancing himself from Hegel’s later conception, which he judges to belong to the obsolete subject-object metaphysics.

The rough and ready distinction between “actualizing” and “existing” interpretations of Hegel, together with the distinction between *interpretation* and *appropriation*, is a useful optic through which to view the Frankfurt School’s relation to Hegel. As in the early essays of Habermas, what we see is that “actualizing” appropriations tend naturally to pair up with “existing” interpretations, as the theorist strips away ideas in Hegel he considers antiquated and embraces and reworks the ideas he still considers valid and conducive to his purposes. This blend of actualising appropriation and existing interpretation is typical not just of Habermas’s approach to Hegel, but also of Horkheimer’s, and indeed Adorno’s.¹³

Adorno’s approach to Hegel is the most conflicted of all the Frankfurt School thinkers, and the most difficult to appraise. He is an appropriator of Hegel, but in a special sense. As he puts it himself, he rejects the “loathsome question of what Hegel means for the present” in favour of the question of “what the present means in the face of Hegel”.¹⁴ When

we pose our two questions of Adorno – “Which Hegel does he appropriate?”; and “To what end?” – we get two contrasting answers. On the one hand, Adorno appropriates the critical, negative, and dialectical philosophy, whose radical approach of “immanent criticism” prepares the way for a negative dialectic. On the other hand, Adorno, in contrast to Horkheimer, Honneth, and Habermas, also appropriates Hegel, the systematic philosopher of absolute idealism, whose positive metaphysics, Adorno argues, sabotages the dialectic by reducing the object to the subject, and consequently eliminates “every particle of a determination of difference”.¹⁵

How does Adorno do this? He undertakes what he calls a “rescuing” critique of Hegel:

Rescuing Hegel, and only rescue not renewal is appropriate – means facing up to his philosophy where it is most painful, and wresting truth from it where its untruth is obvious.

(HTS: 83)

He salvages Hegel’s system by managing to find a moment of truth, even in its untruth. The alleged truth moment in question is Hegel’s system as the “satanic” prefiguration of the fully “socialised society”¹⁶ which has been completely integrated by production and exchange.

To what end does Adorno do this? He wants to avoid what he sees as the “mistake” made by Lukács and Benedetto Croce (and to an extent, more recently, also Habermas and Honneth) of attempting to surgically separate Hegel’s systematic metaphysics from his dialectical logic. The upshot, however, of such an approach – and this is why I would not include this text as recommended reading on Hegel – is to give Adorno a free pass to peddle all the various myths, legends, and misunderstandings that have beset Hegel’s philosophy, especially his *Philosophy of Right*, from its inception.¹⁷ For example, Adorno can be found at various points disparaging Hegel’s work for its “apology for the *status quo*, and its cult of the state” and its “idolisation of the state”.¹⁸

What makes Adorno especially tricky is a certain mercurial evasiveness, which he sometimes tries to pass off as dialectical subtlety. On the one hand, he talks of Hegel as the “ostensible (*angebliche*) Prussian state philosopher” as if he would deny that he was one, only on the very next page to claim that the later Hegel “defends the positive – that which simply is”.¹⁹ Adorno could have saved himself a lot of dialectical labour had he just read, say, T. M. Knox’s 1940 essay “Hegel and Prussianism”, which shows that the existing Prussian state is, in important respects, quite unlike Hegel’s idea of the state.

However, that would, in a way, have crossed his purposes. Adorno’s rescuing critique needs him to be able to smuggle out the radical and progressive dialectical ideas in Hegel, as buried treasure which he has

discovered and “salvaged” only by dint of his own dialectical virtuosity. For instance, he declares:

Hegel’s apologetics and his resignation are the bourgeois mask that utopia has put on to avoid being immediately recognised and apprehended.

(HTS: 47)

The plain truth is not so recondite and implausible. Hegel was bourgeois, but he was also progressive. As the *Doppelsatz* shows, and Heinrich Heine attests, Hegel had to disguise a lot of his more reformist ideas to get them past the censor.

Adorno is of course insightful enough to put his finger on significant passages, where Hegel’s thoughts are recalcitrant to his theory. He cites the passage from §249 of the *Philosophy of Right*, where Hegel writes that “despite its excel of wealth, civil society is not rich enough” to avoid leading to poverty and the creation of a rabble”.²⁰ Adorno then proposes the following argument: first, he objects that Hegel could not imagine an increase in production sufficient to eliminate poverty. And he goes on to claim that this is just another example of Hegel’s statism. As he writes, “Hegel’s philosophy of the state is a necessary tour de force” which “suspends the dialectic”.²¹ The tour de force was necessary, Adorno claims, because otherwise “the dialectical principle would have extended beyond what exists and thereby negated the thesis of absolute identity”.²²

It seems to me that the real interest of the passage is twofold:

1. Hegel was insightful enough to see, well before Marx, that capitalism is such that no mere increase in production will lead to the elimination of poverty, while the relations of production remain unchanged.
2. As A. O. Hirschman puts it in his brilliant and much neglected article, “On Hegel, Imperialism, and Structural Stagnation”, Hegel “had an economic theory of imperialism, when Marx did not”.²³ Hegel foresaw not only that the state would not be able to rein in the antagonisms of civil society, but that this would lead to imperialism and colonialism. What is remarkable is that Hegel is capable of such insight and that, *pace* Marx and Adorno, he does not let his system or metaphysics get in the way of the facts, however recalcitrant they are to his philosophy of objective spirit. So much for the view that his philosophy of objective spirit is merely a satanic prefiguration of a socialised society completely integrated by the capitalist principle of exchange!

I do not want to be overly critical of Adorno’s entire approach to Hegel. His actualising appropriations of Hegel’s philosophy are of great subtlety and interest from the perspective of the development of his own

philosophical project of negative dialectic. But they deploy, as a foil, interpretations of Hegel that are not so much “merely existing” but, as Hegel might say, “lazily existing”. In many ways this is typical of Adorno’s approach to philosophy. As he once wrote in *Against Epistemology*,²⁴ “Husserl’s philosophy is the occasion, not the point”. Much the same applies to *Hegel: Three Studies*.

But the irony remains that Adorno, who, among all the Frankfurt School theorists, has the closest affinity to Hegel, who, as he told his students, thinks of himself “as an Hegelian”, and who embraces Hegel’s dialectical method as his own, is nevertheless the least reliable interpreter of Hegel’s philosophy.

James Gordon Finlayson

Preface

The title of this outstanding and timely collection of essays on the reanimation and transformation of Hegel by Frankfurt School theorists may invite a couple of immediate reactions. One could be, “Not another book on Hegel!” Another could be, “So, is this the first in a series with the formula ‘X’ and the Frankfurt School?” The one I would recommend, and that gets to the core of the importance of this anthology is: “Here is a way to understand the vitality of a tradition, movement, school, and method that is now approaching a hundred-year history”.

Hegel is not just the name of a philosopher who transformed Western philosophy irrevocably, in such a way that we can talk about philosophy after Hegel, in the way we talk about philosophy after Plato, Aquinas, and Kant. As Karl Löwith’s still indispensable *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought* argued eloquently, Hegel’s corpus became the fertile ground from which the major philosophical and intellectual movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries emerged: phenomenology, existentialism, Marxism, and pragmatism. Hegel is also the name associated with one of the most important socio-political movements of the first half of the twentieth century, namely the socialist movements throughout Europe and the so-called developing world. Within this broad left-wing movement, there arose a division between what Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his *Adventures of the Dialectic* turned into a standardised designation, namely between Western and Eastern Marxism, between historical materialism and scientific/dialectical materialism, or what also came to be known as Hegelian-Marxism and Soviet or Orthodox Marxism.

This divide between the historical and dialectical materialism, Western and Eastern Marxism, was fought over how to read Marx’s relationship to Hegel, and sometimes this relationship was expressed in terms of ‘*Back to Hegel!*’, so as to understand better the still-not-exhausted critical and liberatory potential of Marx’s own thinking. This internal struggle of the revolutionary movements of the first half of the twentieth century was superbly captured by George Lichtheim in his 1971 collection of essays, *From Marx to Hegel*, a book from which we can still learn

so much. And so, the recondite, obscure, sometimes incomprehensible work of Hegel became a North Star in the darkening skies of Europe as the continent plunged into two world wars, the extermination of the Jews, and the rise of totalitarianism. All this made it wholly untenable to even make sense of Hegel's (in)famous double dictum: "What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational".

Yet, as Lichtheim rightly points out, the reason why almost a century after Hegel's death there was a call for a return to Hegel was because only by returning to him could we make sense of Marx's call for the "realisation of philosophy". This was none other than the question of the relationship between theory (self-reflection), and *praxis* (practical action), which is at the core of political philosophy.²⁵ Unquestionably and most importantly, however, Hegel is also the name for a project and the key point of reference for critical theory in general, and the Frankfurt School in particular, for Hegel is the metonymy for the dialectic, the dialectical method, or what Herbert Marcuse called the "mental faculty [of] negative thinking".²⁶

I have thus far intimated just how broad the horizon is against which we have to assess and get our bearings when asking about Hegel and the Frankfurt School. As Martin Jay put it at the very outset of his magnificent study, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas*, "[t]here are no easy ways to map the rugged terrain of the intellectual territory known as Western Marxism",²⁷ although Jay's book does currently offer the most detailed topography of that particular discursive territory. Reading the Frankfurt School reading Hegel is part of the mapping of this territory, which means, when approaching the Frankfurt School readings of Hegel, we have to keep in mind how these readings converge or diverge from readings such as those of Lenin, Kautsky, and Trotsky, but also of Benjamin, Bloch, Gramsci, Korsch, and Lukács. The present anthology has these readings in the background, but its territory has been properly delimited.

While Frankfurt School thinkers have produced original and influential readings of practically every major figure in the Western canon, from Kant, to Freud, Nietzsche, Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Mead – to name some of the most well-known – Hegel, is without question, the thinker to which collectively they turned to most recurrently, incessantly, almost obsessively. It may be argued that this is so much the case that the very idea of the "Frankfurt School" as a *school* and *method* would not have its coherence and identity without incessant and relentless returns to Hegel. Let me highlight some key points of references, which will be discussed more extensively in the different chapters of this book.

The project of "critical social theory", as was first laid out by Max Horkheimer in the speech he gave in 1931 when he was inaugurated as director of the Institute for Social Research, already indicated the centrality of Hegel for the task to be undertaken by the institute. In this speech,

Horkheimer identifies Hegel as the one who transformed idealism into social philosophy, bringing philosophy from the ethereal heights of metaphysical speculation into the realm of effective reflection on our collective social existence. Notably, Hegel figures in the speech also as the thinker who will provide the intellectual resources to counter the then hegemonic positivism of the natural (as well as) social sciences. Hegel continued to be a key point of reference for Horkheimer throughout all his work from the 1930s: we can now clearly see in the collection *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings* Horkheimer dealing with the relationship among social philosophy, materialism, and moral theory.

Another early and extremely important “Back to Hegel!” move within the first generation of the Frankfurt School is clearly articulated in the early work of Marcuse. First, there is his 1932 monograph, *Hegel’s Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*, a work that offered a Heideggerian reading of Hegel, and which Marcuse was to repudiate almost as soon as he published it later that year with his essay, “The Foundation of Historical Materialism”. The latter publication was a long review of the then recently discovered and published Marx’s *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. The last sentence of Marcuse’s review bears quoting:

Marx’s critique of Hegel is not an appendage of the preceding critique and foundation of political economy, for his examination of political economy is itself a continuous confrontation with Hegel.²⁸

Yet, along with Theodor Adorno’s works on Hegel (and here I wish to underscore the plural), perhaps the most important work on Hegel by a first-generation Frankfurt Schooler, is Marcuse’s 1941 monograph *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, which offers in its first part an overview and reconstruction of the evolution of Hegel’s thinking, from his earliest writings to his mature thinking. In the second part, Marcuse provides an overview of the rise of the “Young”/“Left” Hegelians, namely Kierkegaard, Bauer, Feuerbach, and, of course, Marx. In the third, concluding section, Marcuse discusses what he called “The End of Hegelianism”, and how it relates to the rise of “Fascist Hegelianism”, and the debates between National Socialists and “Hegel”. The following notable passage from *Reason and Revolution* makes it clear how Marcuse saw the relationship between Hegel and critical social theory:

The historical heritage of Hegel’s philosophy, for instance, did not pass to the ‘Hegelians’ (neither of the right nor of the left) – they were not the ones who kept alive the true contents of his philosophy. The critical tendencies of the Hegelian philosophy, rather, were taken over by, and continued in, the Marxian social theory, while, in all other aspects, the history of Hegelianism became the history of a

struggle *against* Hegel in which he was used as a symbol for all that the new intellectual (and to a considerable extent even the practical political) efforts opposed.²⁹

For Marcuse, the true spirit of Hegel is preserved in Marxian social theory, which is precisely what the Institute for Social Research at Goethe University Frankfurt was carrying forward. Marcuse is tracing a lineage, one from Hegel through Marx, to the efforts of his Frankfurter colleagues at the institute, notably Horkheimer and Adorno. But, as I previously wrote at the outset, Hegel came to represent at least for Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse the ability to think critically and historically, i.e. dialectically.

When we turn to Adorno's engagement with Hegel, we have to immediately correct a misleading impression that he left us with only one, a rather circumscribed and limited, engagement, namely *Hegel: Three Studies*. This book is made up of three long essays that were written between 1956 and 1963. The essays comprising Adorno's book are remarkable for what we can justifiably call their hermeneutical generosity, in contrast to how Hegel is essentially excoriated in *Negative Dialectics*.

"*Skoteinos*, or How to Read Hegel", the last essay of *Hegel: Three Studies*, is a brilliant analysis of Hegel's writing style and why he had to write the way he wrote. If dialectics is the name of the movement of cognition of *Geist* that tries to apprehend the "thing" while communicating it to others, then the only way to express this dynamic self-cognition of *Geist* in the medium of language is to do so elusively, haltingly, erratically, and with murmuring hesitation in the language of pure movement. So, Hegel's language is a language of pure motion that is relentlessly eating itself, distancing itself from the thing, and unmasking its own claim to make it accessible to others. In this essay, Adorno claims that

Hegel's texts are anti-texts . . . his books are not actually books but rather annotated lectures; often they are mere reverberations, not intended to be cogent even in published form.

(HTS: 119)

By the same logic, it could be said that Hegel's language is an anti-language, a language that shows both the seductions and betrayals of language. Adorno's exegesis of Hegel's writing, which in his view aims to refute that philosophy should be beholden to the imperative of precise and clear writing, is also an exegesis of his own writing. The essay could also be read as "*Skoteinos*, or How to Read Adorno".

The misleading impression that has to be corrected is that Adorno's engagement with Hegel was limited to these essays and the long chapter on Hegel's philosophy of history in the *Negative Dialectics*. Now that the transcripts and soundtracks of his lectures in Frankfurt from the 1950s

through the late 1960s are being published, we can read and appreciate the extent of Adorno's sustained and repeated engagement with Hegel.³⁰

When we move to the so-called "second generation" of the Frankfurt School, we have to immediately discuss Jürgen Habermas. While Habermas did not write a book on Hegel, a book of Habermas's engagements with Hegel could easily be edited from his numerous essays on him. Additionally, it would not be far-fetched that eventually we may see in print Habermas's own lectures: since we know he frequently lectured on Hegel in the 1960s, it would be extremely interesting and elucidating to read those lectures.³¹ Let me mention some of the key candidate chapters in such a hypothetical book.

First and foremost, the first chapters would have to include Habermas's three early essays on Hegel that have been included in the 1973 English translation of *Theorie und Praxis*, namely the essay on "Hegel's Critique of the French Revolution", "On Hegel's Political Writings", and the extremely significant essay "Labour and Interaction: Remarks on Hegel's Jena *Philosophy of Mind*". This last essay is important because in it, one may argue, we already have the guideposts for Habermas's linguistic turn. Take, for instance, the last sentences of this pioneering essay:

But to set free the technical forces of production, including the construction of cybernetic and learning machines which can simulate the complete sphere of the functions of rational goal-directed action beyond the capacity of natural consciousness, and thus substitute for human effort, is not identical with the development of norms which could fulfill the dialectic of moral relationship in an interaction free of domination, on the basis of a reciprocity allowed to have its full and noncoercive scope. *Liberation from hunger and misery* does not necessarily converge with *liberation from servitude and degradation*, for there is no automatic developmental relation between labour and interaction. Still, there is a connection between the two dimensions. Neither the Jena *Realphilosophie* nor the *German Ideology* have clarified it adequately, but in any case they can persuade us of its relevance: the self-transformative process of spirit as well as of our species essentially depends on that relation between labour and interaction.

(T&P: 169)

What Habermas calls here "interaction" is what he is going to call later, after he linguistifies critical social theory, "communicative action". Yet, while Habermas argues that Hegel has already recognised the important of both language and interaction in the processes of ego-constitution and the self-identity of social groups during the Jena period, Hegel will eventually submerge these insights under the heavy, metaphysical language of subjective, objective, and absolute spirit. Given that Hegel

seemed to Habermas to have anticipated his own Intersubjectivist Turn towards the reconstruction of communicative reason, it would seem strange or odd that Hegel does not play any significant role in his magnum opus, *The Theory of Communicative Action*.

Yet, if we think of *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* as the philosophical counterpart to the social-theoretical project of *The Theory of Communicative Action*, we can appreciate the key role that Hegel played in Habermas's work. For it is in the former volume that we find the seminal lecture, "Hegel's Concept of Modernity". In fact, this lecture has to be read as a direct complement to the last chapter of volume two of *The Theory of Communicative Action*, "The Tasks of a Critical Theory of Society". If the tasks of this theory are to disaggregate rationalisation and modernisation, i.e. disaggregate modernity, then Hegel, whom Habermas argues is *the* philosopher of modernity, is pivotal – nay, indispensable to those critical tasks.

Another chapter in our hypothetical book would have to be Habermas's essay "Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter", which Habermas wrote for the 1981 Stuttgart Hegel Congress, the telling title of which was *Kant oder Hegel? Über Formen der Begründung in der Philosophie*.³² This particular essay elaborates Habermas's Hegelian understanding of philosophy minus the logical absolutism that wants to give a logical coherence to the "diffused chunks of content thrown up by the sciences".³³ I would also include the following essay by Habermas from the 1980s: "Morality and Ethical Life: Does Hegel's Critique of Kant Apply to Discourse Ethics?"³⁴ This essay is a defence of Hegel vis-à-vis Kant but also takes critical distance from Hegel vis-à-vis discourse ethics. In other words, Habermas focuses on arguing that Hegel's moral philosophy remains relevant today, notwithstanding the linguistification of Kant's moral philosophy by discourse ethics.

If we were to divide my hypothetical book into early, middle, and late Habermas on Hegel, the last half of the book, dealing with the late Habermas, would have to include Chapter 9 of his massive, and surely another one of his *magna opera*, the two-volume *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*.³⁵ This chapter is titled "Linguistic Embodiment of Reason: From Subjective to 'Objective' Spirit" and covers 214 pages in the tightly printed German. This long chapter deals both with Hegel across the spectrum of his work, and with the respective philosophies of language of Herder, Humboldt, and Schleiermacher, too. But the key section, in my estimation, of this chapter is the last part, which deals with how Habermas reads Hegel's conception of reason in history and the history of reason *qua* (i) the achievement of moral autonomy; and (ii) the autonomy of self-critical reason through the very social embodiment of reason in its many institutions and differentiations.

My hypothetically titled *Habermas on Hegel* would tentatively conclude with Habermas's moving, but just as important, lecture he delivered

on the occasion of the celebration of his ninetieth birthday at the Goethe University on 19th June 2019.³⁶ The lecture, most appropriately, was titled “Yet Again: On the Relationship between Morality and Ethical Life”,³⁷ and, as the title indicates, takes up the theme of what remains alive and ever relevant of Hegel’s critique of Kant, and Marx’s critique of Hegel. I will return to this lecture at the end of this preface.

Within the second generation, and among one of the most avid readers of Hegel is, of course, Axel Honneth, who has given us, not one but three books engaging Hegel, reading Hegel, re-reading Hegel, and in many ways, rescuing Hegel from his apparent late-life conservatism, an accusation that has made him unpalatable to so many on the left. Honneth’s *Habilitationsschrift – The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* – which launched his distinctive approach to the tasks of (critical) social theory, as a theory of the social structures mediating recognition, is explicitly built on a careful re-reading of not only Hegel’s *Jena Realphilosophie*, but also the *Phenomenology of Spirit* itself.

In his *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel’s Social Theory*, Honneth undertook the project of what he called a “reactualization of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*”,³⁸ one that would show how a left, critical, emancipatory reading of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* could be carried out as well as jettison Hegel’s alleged statism and subordination of the individual to the legal authority of the state. It is this reactualisation of Hegel’s philosophy of freedom and the self-realisation of individuals within different social structures that culminates in Honneth’s monumental *Freedom’s Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*, in which he draws inspiration from Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* in order to elaborate what he calls “democratic ethical life”. This is what generates ideals of freedom and standards of justice, according to Honneth. His books that read Hegel against Hegel and beyond Hegel offer powerful and eloquent exemplars of the key role that Hegel has played and continues to play within the Frankfurt School. It is Honneth’s method of reactualising Hegel that is evident in Rahel Jaeggi’s also deeply Hegelian books *Alienation*³⁹ and *Critique of Forms of Life*.

I would like to close with an anecdote that Habermas tells in his ninetieth birthday lecture in Frankfurt. Early in the lecture, Habermas tells the audience how, during the 1981 Stuttgart Hegel Congress, he was sitting next to Richard Rorty, who cheekily told him: “You Germans keep floating between Kant and Hegel!” Habermas then informed those present at his lecture that “I did my best to explain to him that insofar as some of us keep going back and forth between Kant, Hegel, *and* Marx, it is because we believe that in these historically transmitted arguments, we can always find answers to systematic questions”.⁴⁰

Hegel has remained a Brandomian “mighty dead” and a “master thinker” for the Frankfurt School thinkers, all the generations and their students, because his work continues to confront us with a host

of “systematic questions” that remain significant agendas and tasks for critical theorising. Some such systematic questions are “How ought we to understand history?”; “Does history have a reason of its own?”; “How can we make sense of history, which seems to pile wreckage upon wreckage?”; “Does reason have a history? If so, how is that history to be told?”; “If freedom has a history, as is clearly evident, how is that history related to the history of reason?”; “What is the relationship between self-reflection, freedom, and the transformation of social institutions which frame and embodied freedom?”; “Are rationalisation and emancipation related, or do they follow divergent paths?”; “What is the relationship between exploitation, alienation, reification, denigration, and moral harm?”; “If freedom is produced through struggles for recognition, then how is that history to be written and told without the recognition of how we became modern *precisely* through slavery, colonialism, imperialism, racism, and the genocides of the last centuries?”; “How is the mental faculty of negative thinking that Marcuse identified with the dialectic [which I quoted at the outset] to be nurtured and sustained in our own contemporary age of Teflon ideologies, social media, ‘know-nothing’, nativist, anti-science, populism(s), fake media, and alleged post-truth?” The essays that make up this volume cover some of these “systematic questions” and more. It is a most welcome and needed contribution.

Eduardo Mendieta

Notes

1. See Finlayson (2017).
2. Namely, Reidel (1975: 16).
3. Hegel is known to have been fearful about losing his job. This is one of several anecdotes told by his friend and pupil, Heinrich Heine. “I often used to see him [Hegel] looking around anxiously as if in fear he might be understood. He was very fond of me, for he was sure I would never betray him. As a matter of fact, I then thought that he was very obsequious. Once when I grew impatient with him for saying: ‘All that is, is rational’, he smiled strangely and remarked, ‘It may also be said that all that is rational must be’. Then he looked about him hastily; but he was speedily reassured, for only Heinrich Beer had heard his words” (Heine 1948: 254–255).
4. Reidel (1975: 20).
5. See Popper (1966: 41); Russell (1961: 702).
6. EL: §6; Werke: 10, 48. In the same vein, in the 1831 transcript of his lectures by D. F. Strauss, he claims: “What is actual, is rational. But not everything that exists is actual. What is bad, is internally broken and nugatory”.
7. “The work . . . is intended as preparation for a revised conception of the dialectic”. (HTS: xxx; vi).
8. Adorno’s remarks on the propinquity between “freedom” and “reason” (HTS: 44), are strongly reminiscent of Marcuse. Adorno’s claims about Hegel’s “closed” system and “closed” argument (HTS: 2; 13) echo Horkheimer’s remark that Hegel’s dialectic is “closed” in his essays of the 1930s “The Rationalist Debate in Contemporary Philosophy”, and “Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics”.

9. Take, for example, the essay by Charlotte Baumann, which contrasts two different actualising interpretations of Hegel's metaphysics in the light of their social theoretical consequences.
10. Marx (1975: 73).
11. See Eduardo Mendieta's preface to this volume.
12. T&P: 143.
13. An excellent discussion of Horkheimer's relation to Hegel can be found in Abromeit (2011).
14. HTS: 1.
15. HTS: 12–13.
16. HTS: 27.
17. See Kaufman (1951) and Stewart (1996). One should also add Knox (1940).
18. HTS: 28.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
20. See the discussion of this very passage by Borhane Blili-Hamelin and Arvi Särkelä, and Paul Giladi in this volume.
21. HTS: 29.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
23. Hirschman (1981: 167).
24. Adorno (1983).
25. Viz. Lichtheim (1971: 4–5).
26. Marcuse ([1955] 1983: vii). The phrase comes from Marcuse's preface to the new edition of this book, which had originally appeared in 1941.
27. Jay (1984: 1).
28. Marcuse (1973: 48).
29. Marcuse (1955, 1983: 252). Italics in the original.
30. These are part of the *Nachgelassene Schriften. Abteilung IV: Vorlesungen*, of which ten volumes have been published, although thus far 17 are listed. Some of these lectures have been translated into English and published by Polity Press.
31. On Habermas's lectures, see Müller-Doohm (2016: 534–541).
32. See Henrich (1983).
33. Habermas (1995: 5).
34. Habermas (1995: 195–215).
35. Habermas (2019a).
36. See my "The Unfinished Project of the Enlightenment: Habermas at 90": <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/unfinished-project-enlightenment-jurgen-habermas-90/>.
37. Habermas (2019b).
38. Honneth (2010: 25).
39. Jaeggi (2016).
40. Habermas (2019b: 729).

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Abbreviations

Adorno:

HTS *Hegel: Three Studies*

MM *Minima Moralia*

ND *Negative Dialectics*

Adorno and Horkheimer:

DE *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Dewey:

DE ‘Democracy and Education’

LW *The Later Works: 1925–1953*

P&P ‘The Public and its Problems’

RP ‘Reconstruction in Philosophy’

Habermas:

BFN *Between Facts and Norms*

KHI *Knowledge and Human Interests*

PDM *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*

PT *Postmetaphysical Thinking*

STPS *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*

TCA I *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume I*

TCA II *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume II*

TP *Theory and Practice*

Hegel:

EL *The Encyclopedia Logic*

EPR *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*

LFA *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*

LPWH *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*

PM *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind*

PN *Philosophy of Nature*

PS *Phenomenology of Spirit*

SL *Science of Logic*

Kant:

APPV *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*

CPR *Critique of Pure Reason*

LL *Lectures on Logic*

Introduction

From “Rescuing” and “Reanimating” Hegel to Taking Stock of Things

Paul Giladi

I

The Rescuing Project: Adorno

What Is Rational Is Actual; and What Is Actual Is Rational

This conviction is shared by every ingenuous consciousness as well as by philosophy, and the latter takes it as its point of departure in considering both the *spiritual* and the *natural* universe.

(EPR: 20)

This passage from Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* is the (in)famous *Doppelsatz*. Read in conjunction with the particularly acrimonious personal conflict between Hegel and Friedrich Schleiermacher (a prominent liberal reformer),¹ as well as Hegel’s spiteful critiques of Jacob Fries² in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, the *Doppelsatz* has painted an enduring picture of Hegel as not merely egregiously statist, but also as a proud socio-political conservative or even extoller of totalitarian practices.

According to Theodor Adorno, the driving systematic force of Frankfurt School Critical Theory³ up until the mid-1970s,⁴ the *Doppelsatz* is either (i) at best, a speculatively articulated conservatism serving as an elaborate defence of the *status quo* that is critically impotent with no significant room for progressive reflection on current power dynamics and current intersubjective recognition orders; or (ii) at worst, a dialectical articulation and logico-metaphysical justification of totalitarianism. For Hegel appears to baldly claim that whatever currently exists – i.e. the Prussian state of 1820 – is rationally structured; and on the basis of such rational ordering and constitution, whatever currently exists is good.⁵

Civil society is an antagonistic totality. It survives only in and through its antagonisms and is not able to resolve them. In the work by Hegel that is most notorious for its restorationist tendencies, its apology for

2 Paul Giladi

the *status quo*, and its cult of the state, the *Philosophy of Right*, that is stated bluntly.

(HTS: 28)

No doubt there is a secret positivist impulse at work in Hegel in his deification of the quintessence of what is.

(HTS: 81)

More than any other of his teachings, that of the rationality of the real seems to contradict the experience of reality. . . . [S]uch a philosophy will apologetically take the side of what exists, which is supposed to be identical with spirit.

(HTS: 85)

Bertrand Russell expresses a very similar view of Hegel's commitments, claiming that "the identification of the real and the rational leads unavoidably to some of the complacency inseparable from the belief that "whatever is, is right".⁶ In sum, then, for Adorno (and Russell), the *Doppelsatz* is viewed as the speculative idealist articulation of the optimistic conservatism notoriously articulated by Alexander Pope in his *An Essay on Man*.⁷ Under this reading, because the *Doppelsatz* negates the very possibility of social critique of current institutions and practices, Adorno (and Karl Popper⁸) additionally charge Hegel with political quietism, insofar as, given the *Doppelsatz*, there seems to be no need to engage in any ameliorative practices or produce any progressive discursive formations. The good is already realised by the rationality of current social reality. Existing power relations and the recognition order of society do not require any changes; they are perfect as they are.

However, for Adorno in particular, the regressiveness of the *Doppelsatz* ultimately comprises a dialectical articulation and speculative justification of *totalitarianism*, when viewed alongside the central pillars of Hegel's idealist metaphysics. Symptomatic of Western metaphysics, according to Adorno, is the interrelation of two philosophical pathologies – "idealism" and "identity philosophy" – which together represent the long-standing philosophical tradition of prioritising universality over individuality. The tradition begins with Plato properly and is *fully* "actualized" in Hegelian thought.

Prioritising universality over individuality is evidenced in claiming that while individuals do have distinctive features, their qualitative distinctness is metaphysically grounded in underlying sameness: Sue and Mel are individuals, and they have different properties by virtue of their individuation. However, they only have their respective individuating properties by virtue of being two particular instantiations of the *same* substance-kind. In this sense, (concrete) universality is metaphysically prior to individuality, as there can be no individuality without (concrete) universality.⁹

However, the metaphysical prioritisation of universality is regarded by Adorno as harmful: the practice of conceptualisation (*Begriffsbildung*), namely the discursive operations of the understanding to bring things under general descriptions and rules, is an *intrinsically violent and authoritarian practice*. This is because non-identity and difference are invariably sacrificed on the altar of unity-in-the-system.¹⁰ Parts are nothing; the whole is everything. In such a way, totalising holism has ontological as well as normative precedence over individuality. Since *Begriffe* function to *seize* the things at which they are directed,¹¹ the cognitive activity of making sense of things through the application of rule-conforming concepts does not respect the diverse integrity of Being; rather, if anything, nomothetic discursive operations and *Begriffsbildung* itself, for Adorno, are effectively a kind of *viol cognitif*, where reality is brutally *forced* to conform to concepts. As Todd McGowan phrases it, “[t]he understanding is the vehicle of epistemic violence”.¹²

For example, consider the following passages, respectively from the *Encyclopaedia Logic* and Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, where the operation of reason seems identical to the (aggressive) operation of the understanding:

We feel the need to bring unity to this manifold; therefore, we compare them and seek to [re]cognise what is universal in each of them. Individuals are born and pass away; in them their kind is what abides, what recurs in all of them; and it is only present for us when we think about them . . . in thinking about things, we always seek what is fixed, persisting, and inwardly determined, and what governs the particular.

(EL: §21Z, 53)

Reason cannot stop to consider the injuries sustained by singular individuals, for particular ends are submerged in the universal end.

(LPWH: 43)

Individuals fade into insignificance beside the universal substance.

(LPWH: 52)

The worth of individuals is measured by the extent to which they reflect and represent the national spirit, and have adopted a particular station within the affairs of the state as a whole.

(LPWH: 80)

From Hegel’s perspective, the aim of inquiry is not to focus on individuality and difference, because, for him, one’s principal philosophic endeavour is to “always seek what is fixed, persisting, and what governs the particular”. In other words, for Hegel, one discursively quests

for concrete universality. The use of “govern” is important here, as this seems to motivate (i) Adorno’s specific worry about the logic of domination operating *in the very structure of* discursivity and reason, and (ii) Adorno’s negative dialectic reversal of Hegel’s claim in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (§20, 13) that *Das Wahre ist das Ganze*:

“The whole is the untrue,” not merely because the thesis of totality is itself untrue, being the principle of domination inflated to the absolute; the idea of a positivity that can master everything that opposes it through the superior power of a comprehending spirit is the mirror image of the experience of the superior coercive force inherent in everything that exists by virtue of its consolidation under domination.

(HTS: 87)

As if Hegel’s writings are not eerie enough, the following passage from the *Encyclopaedia Logic* is manna from heaven in terms of providing apparently clear textual evidence of authoritarianism for any left-wing critic here:

What human beings strive for in general is cognition of the world; we strive to *appropriate* it and to *conquer* it. To this end the reality of the world *must be crushed* as it were; i.e., it *must be made ideal*. At the same time, however, it must be remarked that it is not the subjective activity of self-consciousness that introduces absolute unity into the multiplicity in question; rather, this identity is the Absolute, genuineness itself. Thus it is the goodness of the Absolute, so to speak, that lets singular [beings] enjoy their own selves, and it is just this that *drives them back into absolute unity*.

(EL: §42, 85 – emphasis added)

Given the (post-Kantian) idealist metaphysical framework here, what Hegel seems to argue in the quoted passages and throughout his *corpus* is that whatever reality an individual has is solely determined by its relation to a substance-kind: Sue *is* an instance of “human”; Mel *is* another instance of “human”. In other words, there is no fundamental difference between individuals.

Such metaphysical totalising invariably translates into a form of totalitarianism, because subsuming individuals under general categories leads to assimilating “all individuals into a general type, and thereby exclude or devalue their difference or singularity”.¹³ As Adorno writes:

unity gets worse as its seizure of plurality becomes more thorough. It has its praise bestowed on it by the victor, and even a spiritual victor will not do without his triumphal parade, without the ostentatious pretence that what is incessantly inflicted upon the many is the

meaning of the world. . . . Thus established, the logical primacy of the universal provides a fundament for the social and political primacy that Hegel is opting for.

(ND: 328)

As in his philosophy of history and especially the preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, he resigns himself to reality or appears to vindicate it while sneering at those who would reform the world.

(HTS: 85)

The conception of a totality harmonious through all its antagonisms compels him to assign to individuation, however much he may designate it a driving moment in the process, an inferior status in the construction of the whole. . . . [W]ith serene indifference [Hegel] opts once again for liquidation of the particular. Nowhere in his work is the primacy of the whole doubted.

(MM: 16–17)

Ironically, then, Adorno aims to turn Hegelian metaphysics on its head. For, in an effort to distinguish his objective idealism from Schelling's, Hegel (in)famously claimed that Schellingian monism left inquirers with a view of Being in terms of "the night in which all cows are black".¹⁴ In other words, Schelling had failed to make any room for individuals and was committed to an absurd and alienating Parmenidean conception of reality as undifferentiated and undifferentiating. More plainly put, Schelling had produced an identity philosophy. However, from the Adornian perspective, Hegel is in fact guilty of just exactly that, the very same charge he so publicly levelled at Schelling.¹⁵ On the political front, such ontological totalitarianism is inevitably the theoretical concomitant of social totalitarianism. As James Gordon Finlayson writes, "Adorno sees in Hegel's system and the violence it perpetrates on particulars . . . an analogue to the presently existing social system and the real violence it perpetrates on individuals. Hegel's system, he claims, provides a model for understanding twentieth century totalitarian society *avant la lettre*. . . . It is totalitarian and is complicit with actual totalitarianism".¹⁶

However, for all of his critique of Hegel, the following passages provide one with reason to think Adorno has a wonderfully vexing relationship with his apparent *bête noire*:

I think of myself as a Hegelian.

(LND: 10)

At each new dialectical step, Hegel goes against the intermittent insight of his own logic, forgets the rights of the preceding step,

and thus prepares to copy what he chided as abstract negation: an abstract – to wit, a subjectively and arbitrarily confirmed – positivity.
(ND: 159)

Once one has seen through the cliché of Hegel's bourgeois civility, one will no longer succumb to the suggestion made by Schopenhauer and then Kierkegaard, who dismiss Hegel as a person as conformist and insignificant and derive their negative verdict on his philosophy not least from that.

(HTS: 49)

Hegel's philosophy is eminently critical philosophy.

(HTS: 77)

As though the dialectic had become frightened of itself, in the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel broke off such thoughts by abruptly absolutising one category – the state. This is due to the fact that while his experience did indeed ascertain the limits of bourgeois society, limits contained in its own tendencies, as a bourgeois idealist he stopped at that boundary because he saw no real historical force on the other side of it. He could not resolve the contradiction between his dialectic and his experience: it was this alone that forced Hegel the critic to maintain the affirmative.

(HTS: 80)

I think the best way of squaring these remarks about Hegel involves making a clear distinction between Hegel and Hegelianism, where "Hegelianism" refers not so much to Hegel's actual philosophical commitments and arguments, but principally to a very specific constellation of conceptual frameworks, methodologies, and discursive resources. True to the spirit of the Young Hegelians, Adorno sees Hegelianism as comprising the necessary methodological principles as well as the materialist discursive tools for sustained and progressive *social critique*. However, rather than practise either a Rortian-style creative misreading of Hegel, or extract the rational, progressive Hegelian kernel from the mystical, regressive Hegelian core, Adorno wishes to *rescue* Hegel from himself: Adorno stresses the importance of not just looking "the negative in the face" and "tarrying with the negative".¹⁷ He stresses the need to negatively bathe in Hegelianism for the purpose of unshackling the Hegelian dialectic from ideology and *Begriffsbildung*, so that the Hegelian dialectic can overcome its fear of non-identical thinking:

[p]ersistent involvement with Hegel teaches one – and this is probably true of every great philosophy – that one cannot select what one likes from his philosophy and reject what one finds irritating. It is this

grim necessity and not an ideal of completeness that makes Hegel's claim to system a serious and substantial one. . . . Hence rescuing Hegel – and only rescue, not revival, is appropriate for him – means facing up to his philosophy where it is most painful and wresting truth from it where its untruth is obvious.

(HTS: 83)

II

The Rescuing Project: Habermas

In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Jürgen Habermas, the driving systematic force of Frankfurt School Critical Theory from the mid-1970s until the early 2000s, performs a different rescuing-Hegel act. He argues that there is a significant difference between the early Jena Hegel and the mature Hegel. The early Hegel, like Schiller, Schelling, and Hölderlin, is critically alert to the “authoritarian side”¹⁸ of the Enlightenment and to the ways in which the principle of subjectivity¹⁹ – modernity's principal norm – invariably involves “domination”.²⁰ Habermas points to how Hegel, in his early Jena period theological writings (especially “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate”),²¹ mythopoetically articulates the ways in which modernity's principle of subjectivity operates under a logic involving the “act of tearing loose from an intersubjectively shared lifeworld [established by love]”,²² which results in an “*alienated* subjectivity that has broken with the common life”.²³ In other words, Hegel is the first post-Kantian thinker to properly grasp that modernity is a *problem*, how modernity's liberating intellectual drives invariably involve instrumentalisation and that this hollows out modernity's potential for intersubjectivity and communicative action:

The point of the intuitions from the days of his youth that Hegel wanted to conceptualise was that in the modern world emancipation became transformed into unfreedom because the unshackling power of reflection had become autonomous and now achieved unification only through the violence of a subjugating subjectivity.²⁴

However, for all of the attractiveness of Hegel's radical insights in his early Jena period, Habermas, much like Adorno before him, lambasts the mature Hegel on the grounds that he “did not pursue any further the traces of communicative reason that are clearly to be found in his early writings”.²⁵ Instead, according to Habermas, using Dieter Henrich's expression, Hegel articulated an aloof “*emphatic institutionalism*”²⁶ in the *Philosophy of Right*, leaving the critical concepts of intersubjectivity and communicative action underdeveloped and their emancipatory potential in stasis. For Habermas, there are two substantive problems

with Hegel's mature position: (i) by explicating the ways in which civil society is ultimately sublated in relation to modern state structures, the *Philosophy of Right* "can convict modernity of its offences without having recourse to anything other than the principle of subjectivity immanent within it";²⁷ (ii) emphatic institutionalism encourages *contemplation*, rather than sustained *critique* of the world – the *Philosophy of Right*, in other words, merely muzzles critical dispositionality in favour of representationalistic indifference: "[m]odernity as brought to its concept permits a stoic retreat from it".²⁸

According to Habermas, the early Hegel is active, critical, proto-anarchist – he is charting the path to postmetaphysical thinking through inaugurating the Intersubjectivist Turn and its democratic alternative to formal reason²⁹ – whereas the mature Hegel is passive, aloof, and produces a "*blunting of critique*".³⁰ The mature Hegel relapses into the habits of metaphysical (identity) thinking, which are invariable commitments of the philosophy of the subject:

As we have seen, in Hegel's youthful writings the option of explicating the ethical totality as a communicative reason embodied in intersubjective life-contexts was still open. Along this line, a democratic self-organisation of society could have taken the place of the monarchical apparatus of the state. By way of contrast, the logic of a subject conceiving itself makes the institutionalism of a strong state necessary. . . . Hegel had hardly conceptualised the diremption of modernity before the unrest and movement of modernity was ready to explode this concept. The reason for this is that he could carry out his critique of subjectivity only within the framework of the philosophy of the subject.³¹

From Habermas's postmetaphysical perspective,³² given that Hegel articulates the communicative normative content of modern ethical life in *metaphysical* ways, Hegel – at best – multiplies beyond necessity in his development of a proto-form of communicative rationality and action. For Habermas, the principal problem with *metaphysical thinking* is that it is, to quote Richard Rorty, "a permanent neutral matrix for inquiry",³³ and – especially in Hegel's case – its elaborate, speculative conceptual toolkit neglects the pragmatic dimensions of everyday language-use, which in turn suppresses "the desire for as much intersubjective agreement as possible, the desire to extend the reference of 'us' as far as we can".³⁴

Metaphysical thinking exhibits a pathological cognitive propensity for regarding normative constraints and the ultimate grounds for the justification of our beliefs as being beyond our practices.³⁵ As Carl Sachs writes, "[m]etaphysics, thus understood, consists of the subordination of one's descriptions of the world – one's 'vocabularies', in Rortyan terms – to something beyond all of our normative social practices – something

beyond us, to which we are answerable, and which anchors our descriptions of the world, society, and self in something beyond those descriptions”.³⁶

Postmetaphysical thinking, typified by Habermas’s fallibilist methodology of rational reconstruction, sees a turn to the *pragmatics of communication*, rather than resource to a representationalist mirror of nature:³⁷ “[The former] concedes primacy to world-disclosing language – as the medium for the possibility of reaching understanding, for social cooperation, and for self-controlled learning processes – over world-generating subjectivity”.³⁸ According to Habermas, then, Hegel, much like fellow metaphysical thinkers such as Fichte, Kant, and Descartes – the principal philosophers of the subject – “peers right through language as though it were a glassy medium without properties”.³⁹

For Habermas, successful communication between agents involves the hearer being able to transparently (and, therefore, non-coercively) see and successfully grasp the reasons motivating the propositions put forward by the speaker:

We understand a speech act when we know what makes it acceptable. From the standpoint of the speaker, the conditions of acceptability are identical to the conditions for his illocutionary success. Acceptability is not defined here in an objectivistic sense, from the perspective of an observer, but in the performative attitude of a participant in communication.⁴⁰

The pragmatics of communication do not only reveal how individuality is mediated through a complex process of socialisation. Rather, illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts also point to democratic potentialities. This is because “[w]henver the speaker enters into an interpersonal relationship with a hearer, he also relates himself as an actor to a network of normative expectations”.⁴¹ Communicative practice involves not just grasping the Gricean norms of assertion,⁴² it also involves, to use Wilfrid Sellars’s iconic expression, knowing how to move in the *normative space of reasons*.⁴³ Successful navigation in the space of reasons requires grasping the plurality of communicative inferential commitments and entitlements one has in the *use* of words.

Crucially, the emphasis on communication as an intersubjectively constituted performative act transforms the subject of experience from being an observer/voyeur to being a speaker and hearer. For Habermas, such a position is clearly allied with Kant’s notion of *pragmatic anthropology*, which draws a distinction between *die Welt kennen* and *Welt haben*: “the expressions “to know the world” and “to have the world” are rather far from each other in their meaning, since one only *understands* the play that one has watched, while the other has *participated* in it”.⁴⁴ This empowers human beings by regarding their communicative practices as

normatively authoritative, since it is only through successful discursive exchanges that one develops notions of *autonomy* and *respect*. As such, for a practical relation-to-self to be healthy requires *progressive* intersubjective relations, ones which engender and sustain the Kantian principles of autonomy and respect.

On the corresponding socio-political front, Habermas contends that all social processes are assessed on how well (or invariably not) they foster communicability and the development of “discourse”, namely *non-coercive arenas for the agonistic, public use of reason which help individuals intersubjectively achieve self-realisation*. As he writes, “[a] postconventional ego-identity can only stabilise itself in the anticipation of symmetrical relations of unforced reciprocal recognition”.⁴⁵ Democracy and communication are, therefore, necessarily tied together and *mutually supporting*. The failure to develop communicative action is a barrier to democracy as promised in the public sphere, and the failure to develop democratic values, such as consensus, inclusivity, and equality, is a barrier to communicative action.⁴⁶ Discourse, for Habermas, involves the public testing of claims to universal normative validity; as such, discourse is central to his modern critical social theory, to the extent that his discourse theory is effectively the rational reconstruction of Kant’s moral theory implicitly embedded in the theory of communicative action. For Habermas, discourse comprises two key principles: the Discourse Principle (D) and the Universalisation Principle (U).

(D) holds that “[j]ust those action norms are valid to which all possibly affected persons could agree as participants in rational discourses”.⁴⁷ In other words, valid norms are not extra-human dictates handed down to us. Rather, valid norms are, to use Robert Brandom’s expression, “social achievements”⁴⁸ – *outcomes* of communicative action established and sustained by the intersubjective practices between agents. These social achievements get their normative purchase by virtue of being assented to and acknowledged by a community of agents. Crucially, though, the practice of assenting to and acknowledging normative constraints and normative entitlements comprises determining “the precise content of those implicit norms . . . through a ‘process of *negotiation*’ involving ourselves *and* those who attribute norms to us”.⁴⁹ By virtue of being a process of negotiation, norms are never fixed but always subject to “further assessment, challenge, defence, and correction”.⁵⁰

(U) concerns the formal, Kantian pragmatic procedural justification of moral norms based on (D). In effect, Habermas construes (U) as the rational reconstruction of Kant’s supreme principle of morality in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. As he writes, “[t]he Categorical Imperative is always already in the background here: the form of a general law legitimates the distribution of liberties, because it implies that a given law has passed the universalisation test and been found worthy in the court of reason”.⁵¹ Crucially, the Kantian universalisation

test aims to establish which maxims and interests pass deliberative discursive articulation and challenge such that those maxims and interests are objectively valid (or universally and equally binding for any rational agent *qua* rational agent). By extension, democracy, for Habermas, is a constitutional state model (*Rechtsstaat*) structured in accordance with the principles of communicative action and discourse. *Contra* legal positivism, the principal target of Habermas's discourse theory, the laws of a democratic constitutional state are legitimate, insofar as we arrive at them through discursive practices that are wholly intersubjective and inclusive, since society can only be integrated peacefully in the long-run if social integration involves communicative action and discourse.⁵²

Instead of securing critical sanctuary through Hegel's elaborate post-Kantian Aristotelian idealist metaphysics of *Vernunft*,⁵³ Habermas prefers the *postmetaphysical* contractarian model of uncoerced intersubjectively constituted will-formation and validity claims in a communicative community of free and equal agents – namely, the rationally reconstructed (rescued) normative content of *Sittlichkeit*. In other words, Habermas's postmetaphysical contractarian model is Hegelian intersubjectively constituted agency without any Hegelian “metaphysical mortgages”.⁵⁴ As he writes, “the theory of communicative action can reconstruct Hegel's concept of the ethical context of life (independently of the premises of the philosophy of consciousness)”.⁵⁵

Much like Adorno, Habermas does not practise a Rortyan-style creative misreading of Hegel. However, crucially, their respective rescuing strategies are significantly different, not least because Habermas's post-metaphysical procedural rationality balks at Adorno's disposition to elaborate the emancipatory category of non-identity. In this respect, Adorno's negative dialectics and “anti-system” system are still metaphysically mortgaged. Habermas is, thus, more sympathetic to Croce and Marx, insofar as rescuing Hegel *qua* Croce and Marx involves extracting the living, intersubjective, postmetaphysical kernel from the dead, contemplative, metaphysical core.

III

Reanimating Hegel: Honneth

Axel Honneth's relationship with Hegel, however, is markedly different to his IfS predecessors'. This is because Honneth is neither interested in negatively bathing in Hegelianism, nor is he interested in a rational reconstruction of the early Hegel's insights. Rather, Honneth is interested in *reanimating* Hegel.⁵⁶

While Adornian negative dialectics seek critical refuge in aesthetic experience as “some form of undamaged subjectivity”,⁵⁷ Honneth joins Habermas in postmetaphysically questing after an undamaged

intersubjectivity,⁵⁸ where such an intersubjectivity contains the seeds for emancipatory immanent transcendence. However, this is where the kinship between Habermas and Honneth stops, since Habermas focuses on detailing the communicative rational structure of speech acts, whereas Honneth focuses on detailing the moral grammar of given societies revealed by interweaving social structures and practices of recognition.⁵⁹ For Habermas, the focal point of the Intersubjectivist Turn is a Kantian pragmatist rational reconstruction of communicative practices, which aims to principally answer the weak transcendental question “How is mutual understanding possible in general?”; for Honneth, however, the focal point of the Intersubjectivist Turn is a Hegel-inspired *normative reconstruction* of both individual and social recognition practices: processes of intersubjective recognition *explain* the development of both individuals and societies; and processes of intersubjective recognition *mark* a society’s normative standing.

According to Honneth, individual and social struggles for recognition – whether about self-confidence (corresponding to Hegel’s notion of love), self-respect (corresponding to Hegel’s notion of legal relations), or self-esteem (corresponding to Hegel’s notion of solidarity) – all stem from feelings of *profound disrespect*. These *moral* feelings are generated by their relation to the recognitive structures of a given society and its moral grammar:

Feelings of having been disrespected . . . form the core of moral experiences that are part of the structure of social interaction because human subjects encounter one another with expectations for recognition, expectations on which their psychological integrity turns. Feelings of having been unjustly treated can lead to collective actions to the extent to which they come to be experienced by an entire circle of subjects as typical for their social situation. . . . [T]he models of conflict that start from the collective feelings of having been unjustly treated are those that trace the emergence and course of social struggles back to moral experiences of social groups who face having legal or social recognition withheld from them. . . . [In this case] we are dealing with the analysis of a struggle over the intersubjective conditions for personal integrity.⁶⁰

In *The Struggle for Recognition*,⁶¹ Honneth appeared to squarely follow Habermas’s basic contention that the Intersubjectivist Turn is fully explicated and articulated by Hegel’s early Jena writings. As Christopher Zurn writes, “it is only in the early Hegel that Honneth originally found the outlines of a defensible social theory structured around different forms of recognition”.⁶² Crucially, though, as Honneth’s career went on, he broke from the Habermasian paradigm by regarding the later Hegel as just as significant for the central concept of interest to the Intersubjectivist Turn, namely mutual recognition, to the extent

that *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom*,⁶³ and especially *Suffering from Indeterminacy*⁶⁴ and *Freedom's Right*,⁶⁵ are contemporary revivifications/reanimations/⁶⁶ “reactualizations” of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*.⁶⁷ Like Habermas, Honneth regards the basic project of modernity in a positive light. However, he goes further than Habermas by articulating a complex normative reconstruction of central modern social institutions, such as law, the family, the market, and the democratic constitutional state.

Honneth argues that these institutions – the flagship achievements of modernity – are “social spheres” normatively structured to foster self-realisation: for a practical relation-to-self to be healthy, progressive intersubjective relations must be in place and operating without coercion. Social processes and institutions are, therefore, assessed in terms of how well they contribute to the development of subjectivities which help individuals achieve self-realisation:

For modern subjects, it is obvious that our individual freedom depends upon the responsiveness of the spheres of action in which we are involved to our aims and intentions. The more that we feel that our purposes are supported and even upheld by these spheres, the more we will be able to perceive our surroundings as a space for the development of our own personality. As beings who are dependent on interacting with our own kind, the experiences of such a free interplay with our intersubjective environment represents the pattern of all individual freedom.⁶⁸

IV

Taking Stock

The goal of this volume is to take stock of the fascinating, complex, and complicated dialogue with Hegel in the Frankfurt School Critical Theory tradition. The practice of “taking stock” here does not simply involve providing a topography of the constant dialogue with Hegel in the Frankfurt School Critical Theory tradition. On the contrary, the practice of taking stock, crucially, invites readers to consider how one ought to design the way in which to make best sense of this dialogue. For example, I have structured the discourse in this collection of essays around specific themes: dialectics and antagonisms, ethical life, intersubjectivity and second nature, emancipation, and political theory and political economy. I have also tried to ensure that voices of Frankfurt School figures such as Friedrich Pollock (in particular), who is less “celebrated” than Adorno et al., are not lost in the chorus.

Given the kinds of normative discursive engagements here – namely, thinking about how one ought to structure sense-making of the Hegel-

Frankfurt School relation – I am construing “taking stock” in marked contrast to the ordinary sense of the expression, where the practice of taking stock usually involves a withdrawal from embedded contexts for the purpose of isolated contemplation. However, because of the thematic issues preoccupying Hegel and the full range of Frankfurt School Critical Theorists, and because of the crises brought about by the Anthropocene, retreat from the social world – and abnegations of activity in favour of passivity – is a dereliction of discursive and moral duty.

“Taking stock”, in my specifically technical sense of the expression, is anything but a contemplative act of noetic topography. I am a philosopher; I am, consequently, not predominantly disposed to editing a volume of essays that provides an intellectual history of the Hegel-Frankfurt School relation, surveying convergence and contestation (as interesting as that might well be for some). To take stock of things is to be critically invested, and to constantly engage with contemporary crisis situations for the purpose of not just seeing what Hegel could learn from the Frankfurt School, not just seeing what the Frankfurt School can learn from Hegel, but also what confronting contemporary social reality compels Hegel and the Frankfurt School to do *now*. In this respect, then, adapting the following by Adorno to 2020 is particularly resonating:

A historical occasion like the [200th] anniversary of [the publication of] Hegel’s [*Philosophy of Right*] could have elicited what we call an “appreciation.” But that concept has become untenable, if indeed it ever had any value. It makes the impudent claim that because one has the dubious good fortune to live later, and because one has a professional interest in the person one is to talk about, one can sovereignly assign the dead person his place, thereby in some sense elevating oneself above him. This arrogance echoes in the loathsome question of what in Kant, and now Hegel as well, has any meaning for the present – and even the so-called Hegel renaissance began half a century ago with a book by Benedetto Croce that undertook to distinguish between what was living and what was dead in Hegel. The converse question is not even raised: what the present means in the face of Hegel.

(HTS: 1)

The particular benefit of this collection of essays is that it fills a gap in both the literature on Hegel and the literature on Frankfurt School Critical Theory: (i) there is literature on Hegel that bears on Frankfurt School Critical Theory, but how exactly it bears on that tradition is not especially explicated and critically examined in detail; (ii) there is literature on Frankfurt School Critical Theory (including the extensive literature on Honneth) that takes into account the Hegelian background but not always in much detail; and (iii) the contemporary attempts to

revitalise Frankfurt School Critical Theory taking Hegel into account (e.g. the work of Gillian Rose, and the very recent work of Rahel Jaeggi) are primarily focused on reanimating rather than on *taking stock* of the Hegel-Frankfurt School relation.

Before turning to the structure of this volume, I wish to make one brief methodological point about taking stock of things. As I previously wrote, in my technical sense of the term, to “take stock of things” involves being critically invested with contemporary crisis situations and their phenomenological dynamics.⁶⁹ On the methodological side, this collection, given its orientation towards the formal diagnosis and phenomenological intricacies of modern crisis situations and their effects on agency,⁷⁰ targets ideal theory.⁷¹ The basic post-Kantian notion of agency as embodied and socio-historically embedded subjectivity, to which Hegel and every Frankfurt School Critical Theorist across the generations are ostensibly committed, is bound up with the practice of confronting contemporary social reality head-on: one is, by default, baptised as embodied and embedded in various social environments structured by power relations and norms of material production, gender, race, sexuality, class, and (dis)ability.⁷² This means ideal theory – as a methodology of normative socio-political modelling and engagement – is immediately subject to critical scrutiny by this volume’s clearly post-Kantian methodological orientation.

Ideal theory involves “strict compliance”,⁷³ namely first deducing pure (ideal) principles of justice and the like, which are justified *in abstracto*.⁷⁴ As William James might have put it, the (ideal) theorist then moves down from the buttoned-up, white-chokered and clean-shaven normative principles to the blooming, buzzing confusion that is the contemporary social world, by testing existing social practices and institutions against the ideal action-guiding principles. As John Rawls, the leading exponent of ideal theory,⁷⁵ writes:

A conception of justice must specify the requisite structural principles and point to the overall direction of political action. In the absence of such an ideal form for background institutions, there is no rational basis for continually adjusting the social process so as to preserve background justice, nor for eliminating justice. Thus, ideal theory, which defines a perfectly just basic structure, is a necessary complement to non-ideal theory without which the desire for change lacks an aim.⁷⁶

Ideal theory is, in effect, a methodological version of Kant’s claim that “intuitions without concepts are blind”:⁷⁷ just as, for Kant, the pure concepts of the understanding are transcendental intellectual conditions for making the objects of possible experience intelligible to us; for the ideal theorist, pure models provide the formal-transcendental structure for appraising contemporary socio-political reality. In other words, political

models with no ideal principles are directionless and impractical. To quote Rawls, “[t]he reason for beginning with ideal theory is that it provides, I believe, the only basis for the systematic grasp of [contemporary socio-political] problems”.⁷⁸

Ideal theory, as is well-known, has come under a near-constant stream of justified vitriolic critique from a plethora of traditions ranging from postcolonialism, pragmatism, post-structuralism, and intersectional feminism to queer theory. The Frankfurt School itself has significantly contributed to this barrage of critique, not just through Horkheimer’s programmatic contention that the critical social theorist is a phenomenologically oriented sociologist,⁷⁹ as opposed to purveyor of Platonism, but also by the way Honneth clearly orients *Freedom’s Right* precisely around dispatching ideal theory:

One of the major weaknesses of contemporary political philosophy is that it has been decoupled from an analysis of society and has thus become fixated on purely normative principles. . . . A theory of justice must be based on social analysis.⁸⁰ . . . The motor and the medium of the historical process of realising institutionalised principles of freedom is not the law, at least not in the first instance, but social struggles over the appropriate understanding of these principles and the resulting changes of behaviour. Therefore, the fact that contemporary theories of justice are guided almost exclusively by the legal paradigm is a theoretical folly. We must instead take account of sociology and historiography, as these disciplines are inherently more sensitive to changes in everyday moral behaviour.⁸¹

The basic problem with ideal theory is that pure normative models *eo ipso* provide an asocial and ahistorical structure that is unable to make sense of the messy materialist, hermeneutic, and phenomenological dynamics of contemporary social reality. As Andrea Sangiovanni expresses a similar point, “[t]o be truly ‘action-guiding’, political philosophy cannot offer solely moral guidance justified from a point of view cleansed of political struggle”.⁸²

In place of ideal theory, for example, Honneth’s bottom-up method of social analysis involves first describing current social reality and establishing what specific values social institutions profess to promote and embody. One then details the *actual experiences of actual people*, to see if, and to what extent, these specific values are genuinely instituted and embodied. Immanent social analysis, thus, shares much in common with Amartya Sen’s own variety of non-ideal theory, which is itself, as Paul Raekstad has argued, “a special case of”⁸³ Raymond Geuss’s realist approach to political theory.⁸⁴

A transcendental approach cannot, on its own, address questions about advancing justice and compare alternative proposals for having

a more just society, short of proposing a radical jump to a perfectly just world. Indeed, the answers that a transcendental approach to justice gives – or can give – are quite distinct and distant from the type of concerns that engage people in discussions on justice and injustice in the world, for example, iniquities of hunger, illiteracy, torture, arbitrary incarceration, or medical exclusion as particular social features that need remedying. The focus of these engagements tends to be on the ways and means of advancing justice – or reducing injustice – in the world by remedying these inequities, rather than on looking only for the simultaneous fulfilment of the entire cluster of perfectly just societal arrangements demanded by a particular transcendental theory.⁸⁵

There is compelling reason to believe that socio-political models divorced from both the material and phenomenological content of the contemporary socio-political world are directionless and impractical. As Charles Mills writes, “[h]ow in God’s name could anybody think that this is the appropriate way to do ethics? . . . Why should anyone think that abstaining from theorising about oppression and its consequences is the best way to bring about an end to oppression? Isn’t this, on the face of it, just completely implausible?”⁸⁶

Facing these problems with ideal theory, Sangiovanni has argued that “none of this means that we must abandon normative political theory. . . . What it means is that we need to rethink the way it is normally done”.⁸⁷ Furthermore, Eva Erman and Niklas Möller have argued that they “cannot see why [Rawls’s *considering* oppression in the sense that it has to be removed in order for a basic structure of a society to qualify as just] does not count as ‘starting in the actual’”.⁸⁸

Read baldly, one might construe Sangiovanni as well as Erman and Möller as *reactionary* with their respective critiques of theorists such as Sen, Bernard Williams, Geuss, and Mills. A more charitable reading – but one which still remains critical of both Sangiovanni and Erman and Möller – could be articulated in the following way: we have seen that Sangiovanni is reluctant to commit ideal theory to the flames; we have also seen Erman and Möller insist that even though normative political theories can distort and can be dangerous, “[they] don’t see any grounds for thinking that this would be particularly troublesome for ideal theory”.⁸⁹ I contend that Sangiovanni’s reluctance and Erman and Möller’s insistence reveal the *genuine* blind spots and conceptual lacunae stemming from the ideological grip of ideal theory on political inquiry today.⁹⁰ (This is also partly evidenced by the way that ideal theory is the *default* framework in Anglo-American circles.) Such a discursive hold on socio-political sense-making prevents one from being able to take stock of things, which is both at least psychologically and politically worrisome, if not crippling and stultifying.⁹¹

Ideal theorists have been consistently presented with alternative non-ideal, as well as, realist, theories, such that one is able to properly weigh the pros and cons of different specific theories of justice. If ideal theorists seriously insist that no alternative non-ideal theories and realist theories have been offered, then, sadly, this reveals an eerie epistemic pathology – namely either wilful or non-wilful ignorance and erasure of a rich tradition in social and political philosophy.

V

The Structure of the Volume

The volume is divided into five parts: Part I focuses on dialectics and antagonisms. Part II is concerned with ethical life and intersubjectivity. Part III is devoted to the logico-metaphysical discourse surrounding emancipation. Part IV analyses social freedom in relation to emancipation. Part V discusses classical and contemporary political philosophy in relation to Hegel and the Frankfurt School, as well as radical-democratic models and the outline and functions of economic institutions.

The contributors are some of the newest generation of thinkers interested in the connection between Hegel and the Frankfurt School. The inclusion of authors from a variety of interpretative positions makes this volume unique as well as representative of the latest international research in the field.

In “The Antinomy of Modernism and Anti-Modernism in Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics*”, *Espen Hammer* explores Adorno’s criticisms of Hegel, shows how closely Adorno follows Hegel’s model of self-reflection in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and traces a competing side of Adorno in which he searches for a genuine alternative to dialectical idealism. Rather than a positive dialectic, as we find it in Hegel, which is ultimately deemed ideological, a *negative* dialectic that resists the move to sublation and reconciliation and that highlights the irreconcilable difference between the poles of the dialectical opposition is called for, according to Adorno. Hammer claims that there is a deep tension in *Negative Dialectics* between a modernist search for self-reflective autonomy through ongoing critique and an anti-modernist search, however inarticulable or conceptually indeterminate, for some transcendent otherness. Hammer argues that Adorno (at least implicitly, and in a deeply Kantian vein) accepts the antinomy here. However, he also brings up experiences (some of them aesthetic) that, without being conceptually determinate, point beyond the opposition between immanent and transcendent critique. Such experiences contain, for Adorno, an anticipatory or utopian dimension.

Borbane Blili-Hamelin and *Arvi Särkelä*’s contribution, “Unsocial Society: Adorno, Hegel, and Social Antagonisms”, focuses on the

philosophical innovations at the heart of Hegel's and Adorno's respective approaches to the problems revealed by the antagonisms of civil society. They first briefly sketch Adorno's surprisingly affirmative reading of Hegel's theory of civil society and focus on what role antagonism plays in the latter. Blili-Hamelin and Särkelä argue that Hegel sees education as the central operator in reconciling the antagonisms of civil society. This enables them to conceive of Adorno's social theory as tracing *Bannkreis* through a plurality of models, which discloses the reproduction of the social totality as a form of counter-education (*Halbbildung*). They argue that Adorno conceptualises *Bannkreis* as an answer to the question of Hegel's account of world-spirit that revives the insights of Hegel's conception of civil society.

The first chapter in Part II is James Gledhill's "Reactualising Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Honneth and Habermas". Gledhill contrasts Honneth's sociological-historical interpretative approach with an alternative philosophical-juridical approach and argues that it is the latter that remains most faithful to the spirit of Hegel's enterprise. Central to this alternative interpretation is a focus on Hegel's idea of a "philosophical science of right". In contrast to Honneth's approach, which focuses on reviving a Hegelian vision of the spheres of ethical life, the focus of this approach is methodological rather than substantive. Honneth contrasts his own approach with the Kantian approach of Habermas. However, for Gledhill, Habermas's work appears not as an abstract and empty species of Kantian proceduralism, but rather as an attempt to continue Hegel's methodological approach – albeit in more modest non-metaphysical forms – under changed social conditions. Gledhill argues that the project of reactualising the *Philosophy of Right* has already been going on, largely unappreciated, in the work of Habermas. Its contemporary significance lies in that it offers an alternative to the intuitionist foundationalism about normative justification and instrumental approach to social institutions predominant in contemporary analytic philosophy.

Cat Moir focuses on second nature and the critique of ideology in Hegel and the Frankfurt School. For Moir, although the thinkers of the Frankfurt School shared Hegel's desire to pursue an ethical life in common with others, they also believed that this could only be achieved by unmasking the constructed character of apparently natural – and often repressive – habits and customs. What Hegel called "second nature" was for many Frankfurt School thinkers simply "ideology". Moir reconstructs Hegel's theory of second nature in ethical life and investigates how a range of Frankfurt School figures including Lukács, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, and Habermas incorporated it into their theories and critiques of ideology. Moir argues that without a deeper understanding of the relationship between the critical theory of ideology and Hegel's concept of second nature, we fail to appreciate the character, scope, and significance of Hegel's influence on the Frankfurt School. By investigating

how the idea of second nature influenced the tradition of ideology critique, Moir aims to enrich our understanding of Hegel's work, his impact on the Frankfurt School, and the concept of ideology in the critical theory tradition.

The first chapter in Part III is by *Charlotte Baumann*. She focuses on critiquing Robert Pippin's reading of Hegel's logic as revealing norms that determine how thinking beings can best make sense of the world. For Baumann, by contrast, Hegel's metaphysics is a metaphysics of structures and relations, rather than a substance-metaphysics, because Hegel proposes against Spinoza and Leibniz that structures and relations are more fundamental than substances. According to Baumann, Hegel's metaphysics has a descriptive as well as a critical and prescriptive function: Hegel's *Logic* progresses from the least coherent and inclusive structure, which allows for problematic and limited types of freedom only, to the structure which enables most freedom and truly contains diversity. For Baumann, Hegel's attention is primarily directed at the respective whole, not because he glorifies the whole as an instantiation of God, but because the social whole or structure determines the options, roles, functions, and freedom of human beings. She argues that any serious discussion of freedom, therefore, has to focus on the social structure, how it functions, and whether it is beneficial for and controlled by individuals.

Victoria I. Burke argues that Hegel's technical account of *der Begriff* has emancipatory power. She notes that Hegel, in the *Science of Logic*, rejects essentialist conceptions of identity and historical necessity. For Burke, the relation between "essence" and "concept" in Book II of the *Logic* is unlike the relation between "essence" and "form" in Plato or Kant. She defends this claim not by comparing Hegel's notion of "essence" with similar categories in Platonic and Kantian texts, but rather by focusing more narrowly on two transitions in the *Logic* that illustrate Hegel's break from prior philosophy regarding his account of essence. According to Burke, the transition in Book I from "the ought" to infinity, in combination with the transition in Book II from the opposition between *Existenz* and appearance to *Wirklichkeit*, compose the core of Hegel's rejection of a Platonic-Kantian normative model of essence. The category of actuality is the turning point of the *Logic* and shows that Hegel rejects all essentialist conceptions of form. Burke extends Marcuse's interpretation of the *Logic* to treat the category of actuality in the context of recent feminism and political theory.

Part IV opens with *Paul Giladi's* chapter, which challenges (i) the liberal/social democratic reading of the *Doppelsatz* and *Sittlichkeit* as the best way of making sense of Hegelianism as politically progressive, and (ii) the particularly radical kind of critical theory which questions whether Hegel's theory of social freedom can be regarded as a *genuine* critical social theory. Giladi argues the liberal/social democratic reading does not make much sense of Hegelianism as politically progressive, and

if anything, these “anguished Tory” interpretations stultify the radical emancipatory dimension of Hegelianism. He then goes on to argue that under revolutionary critical theory, not only do critics become reified, but that the notions of social freedom and being at home in the world are disastrously misunderstood as either endorsing social democracy, which renders Hegelian resources as normatively impotent, or as justifying ideological and socio-economic subjection. For Giladi, the “dragon seed” project of Hegelianism neither endorses the *status quo*, nor espouses liberal reformism, nor offers revolutionary theory. Rather, the emancipatory Hegelian project shares much more in common with a radical deliberative democratic call for effort to carefully and radically actualise the “normative surplus” in existing recognition orders and social spheres as the way to dismantle the master’s house.

Federica Gregoratto concludes Part IV, arguing that the critical, emancipatory aspect of the Hegelian notion of freedom, namely social freedom needs further investigation and elaboration. For Gregoratto, human freedom is not only activity. Crucially, human freedom also involves moments or phases of passivity: we are not free simply insofar as we do something, or to the extent to which we are in the position of doing something. Our social freedom curiously requires that we undergo particular experiences, that we are led by “forces” we cannot and should not (entirely) control. Gregoratto first reconstructs and reformulates the idea of social freedom against the background of competing notions of freedom. After sketching out the ways in which recent philosophical contributions have been trying to “naturalise” freedom, she expounds on an argument developed by Adorno in *Negative Dialectics* against the Kantian conception of autonomy, and applies it to Hegel’s notion of social freedom as well. Gregoratto then focuses on important passages from James Baldwin’s *Another Country*, to provide a paradigmatic exemplification of social freedom, namely passionate or erotic love, that turns out to be particularly revealing when illustrating her revised notion of social freedom.

Jean-Philippe Deranty, in the first chapter of Part V, problematises the long-standing suspicions of classical and contemporary political philosophy by Frankfurt School Critical Theorists, so that one may question the boundaries that are often erected within Frankfurt School Critical Theory in relation to political philosophy, and thereby encourage Frankfurt School Critical Theorists to engage more substantially with the latter. Deranty argues that if we restrict the focus to the most eminent representatives of the Frankfurt School tradition, a consistent project can be identified from the moment of its inception until today. He distinguishes a number of senses of “politics” in which Frankfurt School Critical Theory takes an interest, as a direct result of its project, explaining why, throughout the generations, Frankfurt School Critical Theorists have been suspicious of classical and contemporary political philosophy. To

justify these claims and the call for greater cooperation between the traditions, Deranty highlights a number of areas in which work in Frankfurt School Critical Theory has shown itself to be relatively underdetermined on political issues, and he provides some suggestions for how contemporary critical theory might address some of its deficits in the treatment of political questions, by engaging with authors situated outside the Frankfurt School tradition.

The final chapter of Part V, and which concludes the volume, is by *Christopher Yeomans and Jessica Seamands*. According to Yeomans and Seamands, “the standard story” sees Hegel’s primary contribution to Frankfurt School Critical Theory as methodological, through his introduction of the practice of immanent critique. But Hegel ruins his own insight by simply resolving the tensions that make such critique possible in an excessively political and affirmative doctrine of absolute spirit. Hegel’s conceptual machinery for identifying and learning from those tensions must then be reoriented by Marx’s focus on economics in order to generate the “Critical Theory of Society”. However, for Yeomans and Seamands, such a narrative misses a particular continuity in the treatment of *political economy* between Hegel and the Frankfurt School. The aim of their chapter is to reveal and trace that continuity between Hegel and Friedrich Pollock, the foremost political economist among the first generation of the Frankfurt School Critical Theorists. The continuity is not biographical, but conceptual: Yeomans and Seamands argue that both Hegel and Pollock are concerned with institutional design; with the personal, political, and economic functions of institutions; and with the varying senses in which those institutions and their norms are actual and valid.

Notes

1. The Prussian Reform Movement had officially started in 1807 under the leadership of Heinrich Karl vom Stein and Karl August von Hardenberg, after the second Treaty of Tilsit between Prussia and Napoleon. Fries, a German nationalist and republican, was ostensibly politically progressive for many in the Prussian Reform Movement, unlike Hegel, who was a constitutional monarchist. In early 1819, Hardenberg and Wilhelm von Humboldt drew up a constitutional plan for bicameral assemblies. However, following the assassination of the right-wing playwright August von Kotzebue by Karl Ludwig Sand, the *Bundesversammlung* issued the repressive Carlsbad Decrees on 20th September 1819. These instituted censorship across all the states of the German Confederation. In doing so, King Friedrich Wilhelm III had broken his 1815 promise to introduce a new, liberal constitution, and had now stultified the Prussian Reform Movement as well as Hardenberg and Humboldt’s constitutional plans. The Carlsbad Decrees forced universities to fire “demagogues”, namely progressively minded academics deemed to have “an influence on the minds of the young through the propagation of corrupt doctrines, hostile to public order and peace or subversive of the principles of the existing political institutions” (viz. Schieder 1970: 30–31). Arguably, the most famous of the demagogues were Wilhelm De Wette and Fries. De Wette,

who was a known reformer and (yet another!) bitter personal foe of Hegel, lost his position at the University of Berlin. Fries was dismissed from his professorship at the University of Jena, due to his participation in the Wartburg Festival on 18th October 1817. At the same time, however, Hegel's star (on the rise since Heidelberg) continued to soar in Berlin, where he took up the Chair of Philosophy in 1818. Hegel was never branded a "demagogue", and therefore never suffered and experienced persecution in the same way as De Wette, Fries, and some of his own students (such as Victor Cousin). As Frederick Beiser puts it, "[s]ince [Hegel] enjoyed the support of Altenstein [the Prussian minister of education who had offered Hegel the post at Berlin previously held by Fichte], and since he had supported the dismissal of two liberal professors, whom he had viciously attacked in the Preface of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel appeared to endorse a reactionary politics. This was the beginning of one of the oldest Hegel legends: that he was a spokesman for the Prussian restoration" (Beiser 2005: 16).

2. See the following passage from the Preface: "[a] leader of this superficial brigade of so-called philosophers, Herr Fries, had the temerity, at a solemn public occasion which has since become notorious, to put forward the following idea in an address on the subject of the state and constitution: 'In a people among whom a genuine communal spirit prevails, all business relating to public affairs would gain its *life from below, from the people itself; living societies, steadfastly united by the sacred bond of friendship*, would dedicate themselves to every single project of popular education and popular service'; and so on" (EPR: 15).
3. For an outstanding account of Hegel's reception by Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse, see Finlayson (2017).
4. The term "Frankfurt School" arose to describe various Western Marxist thinkers affiliated or generally associated with the Institute for Social Research (*Institut für Sozialforschung* – www.ifs.uni-frankfurt.de/) at Goethe University Frankfurt. The Institute for Social Research (IfS) was founded on 3 February 1923 by Felix Weil (1898–1975), Kurt Albert Gerlach (1886–1922), Karl Korsch (1886–1961), who was Weil's PhD supervisor, and Friedrich Pollock (1894–1970). Weil had organised the *Erste Marxistische Arbeitswoche* in 1922, which was attended by György Lukács (1885–1971), Korsch, Karl August Wittfogel (1896–1988), Pollock, and others. The event was so successful that Weil negotiated with the Prussian Ministry of Education to establish a building and the funding of full salaries for a Western Marxist research institute. The IfS officially opened on 22nd June 1924, and its early members included Adorno (1903–1969), Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), Erich Fromm (1900–1980), Henryk Grossman (1881–1950), Carl Grünberg (1861–1940), Max Horkheimer (1895–1973), Otto Kirchheimer (1905–1965), Siegfried Kracauer (1889–1966), Leo Löwenthal (1900–1993), Lukács, Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), Franz Leopold Neumann (1900–1954), and Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1899–1990). The Prussian Ministry of Education had originally named Gerlach as Director of the IfS. However, following Gerlach's untimely death on 19 October 1922, Carl Grünberg became the first official director of the IfS, with Horkheimer succeeding Grünberg in 1930. On 13 March 1933, in the immediate wake of Hitler's rise to power, the IfS was closed; and on 14 July, the Gestapo dissolved the IfS for contributing to "anti-state efforts". In 1934, the now-exiled IfS found sanctuary in New York at Columbia University. Horkheimer and Pollock moved to California in 1940 and were joined by Adorno a year later. Horkheimer returned to Germany in autumn 1946, and in 1950, the IfS was re-established in Frankfurt as a private foundation affiliated with Goethe University. Adorno returned to Frankfurt in 1949 and became the director of the IfS, following Horkheimer's retirement in

1959. Adorno tragically died on 6 August 1969. His death was a significant symbolic and material blow to many at the IfS. *Jürgen Habermas* (1929–), who had reconciled with Adorno after previously falling out with him and Horkheimer during his studies, left Frankfurt soon after, becoming the director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of the Scientific-Technical World in Starnberg in 1971. (In 1964, Habermas took up Horkheimer's Chair in Philosophy and Sociology, with Adorno's support. Habermas, though, rejected the offer to direct the IfS.) Habermas worked in Starnberg until 1983 when he returned to Frankfurt and the IfS, taking up again his Chair in Philosophy and Sociology. The West-German higher education reforms of 1971 saw the pedagogical functions of the IfS taken over by the newly created Department of Social Sciences at Goethe University. Between 1972 and 1996, the IfS was informally led by *Gerhard Brandt* (1929–1987) from 1972 until 1984, *Wilhelm Schumm* (1937–) from 1984 until 1989, and *Helmut Dubiel* (1946–2015) from 1989 until 1997. In 1997, the IfS was restructured in the wake of the instituting of a college of social scientists led by a director responsible for the research programme. Until March 2001, the directorship was held by *Ludwig von Friedeburg*, who had formally remained director of the IfS during his time as Hessian Minister of Education between 1969 and 1975. *Axel Honneth* (1949–) directed the IfS from 2001 until 2018. During Honneth's directorship, the Theodor W. Adorno Archive was established in 2005. In 2019, *Ferdinand Sutterlüty* (1962–) took over as provisional director of the IfS until a successor to Honneth is named.

5. Cf. Rudolf Haym's charge that "Hegel's *system* is the philosophical home of the spirit of the Prussian Restoration" (Haym 1962: 359). Cf. "As far as I can see, in comparison with the famous saying about the rationality of the actual in the sense of Hegel's Preface, everything Hobbes and Filmer, Haller or Stahl have taught is relatively liberal doctrine. The theory of God's grace and the theory of absolute obedience are innocent and harmless in comparison, with that frightful dogma *pronouncing the existing as existing to be holy*" (Haym 1962: 367–368).
6. Russell 1961: 702.
7. Namely "All nature is but art unknown to thee,
All chance, direction which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good;
And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right".
8. See Popper (1966).
9. Namely "Hegel concludes in an ever-recurring mode, the particular is nothing. The modern history of the human spirit – and not that alone – has been an apologetic labour of Sisyphus: thinking away the negative side of the universal" (ND: 327).
10. Namely "What tolerates nothing that is not like itself thwarts the reconciliation for which it mistakes itself. The violence of equality-mongering reproduces the contradiction it eliminates" (ND: 142–143).
11. The German for "concept", *Begriff*, comes from the verb *Begreifen*, which in turn is derived from *Greifen*. "*Greifen*" is often translated as meaning "to grab/to grip/to seize/to snatch/to capture/to strike/to take hold/to bite".
12. McGowan (2019: 73).
13. Stern (2009: 367).
14. PS: §16, 12.

15. On 1 May 1807, shortly after the publication of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel wrote to Schelling, who had been based in Munich since 1806. In the letter, Hegel stated (among other things) his desire for Schelling to publicly approve and endorse his first mature work. Additionally, Hegel endeavoured to tell Schelling that in the polemical part of the Preface, he was critiquing *Schelling's followers*, rather than Schelling himself. Schelling, in his reply to Hegel in August 1807, was justifiably bemused and pressed his former colleague for clarity about his intended target in the Preface. Hegel never replied. See Pinkard (2000) for further on the complicated personal relationship between Hegel and Schelling.
16. Finlayson (2014: 1160).
17. Cf. PS: §32, 21.
18. PDM: 27.
19. I.e. rational autonomy: “reason in the supreme seat of judgement before which anything that made a claim to validity had to be justified” (PDM: 18).
20. PDM: 18.
21. See T&P: 142–169.
22. PDM: 29.
23. Ibid.
24. PDM: 32–33.
25. Ibid., p. 31.
26. Ibid., p. 41.
27. Ibid., p. 34.
28. Ibid., p. 43.
29. See Särkelä (forthcoming 2021) for an argument that Horkheimer is the predecessor of the Habermasian rescuing project.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., pp. 40–41.
32. See Habermas (2019) for further on postmetaphysical thinking. And, yes, Habermas is still as active as ever with a 1,752-page two-volume work!
33. Rorty 1982: 80.
34. Rorty 1991: 23.
35. Cf. “I use ‘metaphysics’ as the name of the belief in something non-human which justifies our deep attachments”. (Rorty 2001: 89) Cf. Rorty (2001: 90–91).
36. Sachs (2013: 700).
37. In *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Habermas deems that the central lesson of Kantianism to consist in viewing philosophy as a *second-order* critical discipline. *Contra* positivism and scientism, philosophical engagement with the natural sciences does not amount to adopting the methodologies and basic results of natural scientific inquiry. Or, to put this another way, the legacy of Kantian critique does not comprise making metaphysics the vassal of physics. Rather, under Kantianism, the task of philosophical inquiry is to engage in the *positive* practice of critique, namely explicating the logic and conditions of different kinds of inquiries. Crucially, this “quasi-transcendental” (KHI: 194) notion of critique involves disclosing the historically evolving presuppositions of first-order disciplines, thereby revealing the necessary conditions for the possibility of forms of knowledge. Central to Habermas’s argument is his rejection of a purely representationalist model of inquiry – i.e. a view of inquiry as disinterested from cultural or historical situatedness. In addition to claiming that a “view from nowhere” is incoherent given how human cognition is both embedded and embodied through and through, Habermas goes further by claiming that the transcendental rules governing the practices of

inquiry are born out of *our evolutionary tale*, specifically through the development of our anthropologico-epistemic interests (namely KHI: 196). These interests both govern and are receptive to our cognitive architecture, psychological orientations, and linguistic practices: different epistemic practices, vocabularies, and forms of action have developed out of different logics of inquiry, *because each particular practice works under a particular cognitive interest*: (i) an interest in instrumental control; (ii) an interest in communication; and (iii) an interest in emancipation (namely KHI: 308).

38. PT: 153.

39. Ibid., p. 161.

40. TCA I: 297–298.

41. PT: 190.

42. See Grice (1975: 26–30).

43. See Giladi (forthcoming 2021) for more on this.

44. APPV: [120], 4.

45. PT: 188.

46. *Contra* Adorno and Horkheimer's Hegelian-Marxist account of establishing "real democracy" through the institutionalisation of "expressive totalities" *via* social ownership of the means of production and the progressive deployment of productive forces in general, Habermas sees *speech* as the key to articulating a convincing critical theory of modern capitalist society.

47. BFN: 107.

48. Brandom (2002: 216).

49. Houlgate (2007: 139).

50. Brandom (1994: 647).

51. BFN: 120. See also BFN: 153.

52. See Habermas (1995).

53. Cf. "Hegel's metaphysical mushroom has grown not in the gardens of science but on the dunghill of servility" (Fries 1970: 221).

54. PDM: 316.

55. Ibid.

56. See Särkelä (forthcoming 2021) for an argument that Marcuse is the originator of the Honnethian-style reanimation of Hegel.

57. Zurn (2015: 16).

58. See Pippin (2015).

59. I think it is important to note that there are plenty of significant points of disagreement between Honneth and Habermas here. For example, (i) Honneth's "lifeworldly" action-theory of political economy, which is fully elaborated in *Freedom's Right*, squarely rejects Habermas's system theoretic functionalist analysis of economic activities, economic structures, and the state; (ii) Habermas's own variety of normative reconstructive analysis is focused just on the democratic constitutional state, unlike Honneth's normative reconstruction, which is concerned with *all* spheres of social freedom.

60. TSR: 165.

61. Honneth (1995).

62. Zurn (2015: 27).

63. Honneth (2010).

64. Honneth (2000).

65. Honneth (2014).

66. See Pippin (2015).

67. See Särkelä (2018).

68. FR: 60.

69. Renault (2017, 2019) is a paradigm example of attentiveness to the phenomenology of injustice et al.

70. Specifically, fully making sense of the pathologies in modernity, and orienting inquiry around detailing the experience of poverty, injustice, oppression, totalisation, instrumentalisation, invisibilisation, automation, alienation, and pathological forms of recognition.
71. “Ideal theory” is equivalent to “normative political theory” and is the dominant tradition in Anglo-American political philosophy.
72. Rawlsians are likely to push back here by pointing out John Rawls’s limited contextualism. However, such pushback is not suasive or rationally compelling in the more relevant sense, as articulated by Charles Mills (2005).
73. Namely “I shall assume that . . . the nature and aims of a perfectly just society is the fundamental part of the theory of justice” (Rawls 1971: 9).
74. Namely Rawls’s notions of “the original position” and the “veil of ignorance”.
75. Though Rawls, historically speaking, is the leading exponent of ideal theory, one must not equivocate Rawlsianism with ideal theory. Equivocating the two conflates ideal theory with liberal egalitarianism: crucially, ideal theory – as a method for normative political theorising – is also practised by philosophers of a very different political-ideological persuasion to Rawls and Brian Barry. For example Allen Buchanan, Joshua Cohen, G. A. Cohen, Ronald Dworkin, David Miller, and Robert Nozick – in their own respective ways with differing political-ideological commitments to Rawls (and Barry) – are all ideal theorists.
76. Rawls (1993: 285).
77. CPR: A51/B76.
78. Rawls (1971: 8).
79. Namely Horkheimer (2002: 192).
80. FR: 1.
81. Ibid., p. 329.
82. Sangiovanni (2008: 229).
83. Raekstad (2015: 232).
84. I think it is worth noting that while there is a slight risk of bunching non-ideal theory with political realism, insofar as non-ideal theory principally focuses on feasibility constraints, whereas political realists are principally concerned with the “domain of real politics and political agency, and then to contribute, in some way, to improving the actions of the agents involved” (Raekstad 2015: 228). However, I wonder if the differences between non-ideal theory and political realism are over-substantiated. I think non-ideal theory and political realism are more usefully seen as partners.
85. Sen (2006: 218).
86. Mills (2005: 169, 171). Cf. “What is characteristically liberal is the attempt always to see society *sub specie consensus*. This approach, however, is completely misguided” (Geuss 2001: 4); Cf. Geuss (2008: 6–7).
87. Sangiovanni (2008: 234).
88. Erma and Möller (2013: 42).
89. Ibid., p. 43.
90. Cf. Raekstad (Forthcoming: 9–10).
91. To put my overall methodological argument in a schematic form:
 1. If one practises ideal theory, then one does not think of oneself as an embodied and embedded agent through and through.
 2. If one does not think of oneself as an embodied and embedded agent through and through, then one cannot take stock of things.
 3. Therefore, if one practises ideal theory, then one cannot take stock of things.

4. If one cannot take stock of things, then one's social-political theory is ultimately vacuous and normatively impotent.
5. Therefore, if one practises ideal theory, then one's social-political theory is vacuous and normatively impotent. Erman and Möller can reply to what I have proposed here by arguing that "[t]o take this route [namely, a radical approach that sees nonideal theorising as a substitute for, rather than a complement and extension of, ideal theorising, and offer an alternative account of justice], however, proponents of nonideal theory would have to go beyond finding faults with ideal theorists such as Dworkin and Rawls, and engage in positive theorising in this regard. For not until we are presented with alternative theories can we properly weigh the pros and cons of different specific theories of justice across the ideal/nonideal divide. In our view, this has not yet been properly done" (Erman and Möller 2013: 44). In response, there is a plethora of positive theorising in exactly this sought regard. Erman and Möller's caustic remark incorrectly depicts critics of ideal theory as only talented in finding fault with normative political theory, rather than also (and centrally) disposed to constructing and articulating positive alternatives to ideal theory. See, for example Sen (2009) and Honneth (2014) as excellent examples of rich and positive alternatives to Rawlsian frameworks.

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Part I

Dialectics and Antagonisms

1 The Antinomy of Modernism and Anti- Modernism in Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*

Espen Hammer

I

Theodor W. Adorno's 1966 *Negative Dialectics* has proven to be one of the great Rorschach tests of modern European philosophy.¹ To some, such as Adorno's erstwhile assistant Jürgen Habermas, who went on to revise the foundations of Frankfurt School Critical Theory, it has been read as an exercise in socially irrelevant esotericism. Others have found in it an intellectually refined yet historically abstract despair or even some sort of quasi-theological mysticism.² More sympathetic audiences, especially since the turn of the millennium, have read it as a genuine attempt at rethinking the role and meaning of philosophy after Auschwitz, a productive reactualisation of dialectical thinking after the historically undeniable downfall of Hegel's objective idealism, and as a timely return to theory after the manifest failures of practice.³

Few readers of *Negative Dialectics*, regardless of their overall assessment, will have failed to recognise the importance that Adorno assigns to *philosophy as an agent of social critique*. Even in its most rarified form, he claims, philosophy carries the potential for conducting social critique and identifying ideology and structures of alienation. Nor will any serious interpreter of the book miss how the analysis, familiar from the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, of contemporary social reality as wholly under the sway of impersonal mechanisms of coordination and enforced integration, motivates the crucial, and for this phase of Adorno's development, defining interest in the *non-identical* – whether conceived as a moment internal to the dialectic itself or, at the other extreme, as some positive being recalcitrant to all forms of conceptual subsumption, instrumentalisation, and commodification.

In some of the most contentious parts of *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno supplements his own account of philosophical thinking and experience, including the configuring of the non-identical, with dialectical, meta-critical readings of such classical figures as Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger. While all of these readings (with the possible exception of that of Heidegger, his philosophical arch-nemesis) locate what Adorno understands

as progressive moments, i.e. moments that point beyond the manifest goals of its authors, their overall purpose is to demonstrate how deeply dependent the post-Kantian tradition has been on idealist, identitarian assumptions, prioritising the general over the particular, and calculative over end-oriented reasoning. Based on these assumptions, such key philosophical concepts as those of experience, truth, and reality have been given a decisive spin towards the subjective, instrumental, and the abstract. The world of experience, in particular, has become equated with whatever it is that may satisfy general procedural or instrumental constraints. Kant, on these readings, comes across as a Lockean, subjective idealist, symptomatically offering an account of reified subjectivity in which the world of sensuous experience is reduced to mere abstraction; Hegel, equally in thrall to socially mediated ideas of integration, is rendered a Neo-Platonist ultra-idealist for whom only spirit or *Geist* ultimately exists; while in Heidegger a neo-mythological and totalising language of impersonal, collective destiny, *Geschick*, is supposed to have undermined all possible claims to spontaneity and rational self-determination.⁴

If *Negative Dialectics* may appear unwieldy and seem to lend itself to numerous, often incompatible, readings, then it is not only because of its many sub-themes and readings, but even more, I will argue, because of the often-unacknowledged presence in it of an apparently irresolvable tension. The tension, creating a real conundrum for interpreters, relates to the co-existence of two very different and perhaps incompatible philosophical strategies – one that I will call “modernist” (or “enlightenment”), and another that I call “anti-modernist” (or “anti-enlightenment”). The modernist strategy revolves around a commitment to self-reflection and self-authorisation. It calls for autonomy and reason-giving. The anti-modernist strategy, however, focuses on a demand for transcendence, the discovery of a source of ethical and epistemic authority existing independently of our *de facto* means of knowing or relating to it. It refers to our *receptive* capacities, calling for attentiveness and openness rather than just *inferentially* structured reason-giving.

Are these strands the horns of a dilemma, forming an irresolvable antimony (with equally pressing but contradictory results) that perhaps threatens to unravel Adorno’s whole edifice? Or are they perhaps best considered as mutually informing, determining, or even enforcing one another? Adorno’s negative dialectic demands that the Hegelian move from antinomy to dialectical reconciliation should be resisted.⁵ We cannot hope, and indeed *should not* aspire, to overcome the dilemma. Attempting to respect that demand, I argue that Adorno, *rather than resolving the antinomy, accepts it as an adequate platform from which to approach and diagnose the purportedly unreconciled state of modernity*. A negative dialectic is not teleological. Unlike Hegel’s dialectic, it is not meant to lead us to a place predetermined by the nature of the conceptually determined opposition. Rather, it is supposed to issue in the experience

of what Adorno calls “non-identity”. Only through that experience may one anticipate real change.

II

The Nature of the Antinomy

In very general terms, the understanding of modernism and of modernist thinking that I will apply revolves around notions of self-reflection, i.e. the use of reason to achieve freedom via rational self-authorisation. No classical statement of the ethics informing this attitude may be more pertinent and inspiring than that of Kant’s famous definition of enlightenment as *Sapere aude*, “have courage to use your *own* understanding!”⁶ Through critique and self-critique, man, on Kant’s view, is supposed to emerge “from his self-incurred immaturity”. Enlightenment is thus tantamount to be able to think for oneself – to rationally stand behind one’s words and deeds.

Adorno’s own modernist (or enlightenment) commitments can be approached from several different angles and within a number of different contexts. An obvious one would take its lead from the opening passage of the introduction to *Negative Dialectics*, in which Adorno quickly, yet with characteristic elegance and verve, situates himself vis-à-vis the classical distinction between *theoria* and *praxis*.

Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realise it was missed. The summary judgement that it had merely interpreted the world, that resignation in the face of reality had crippled it in itself, becomes a defeatism of reason after the attempt to change the world miscarried. Philosophy offers no place from which theory as such might be concretely convicted of the anachronisms it is suspected of, now as before. Perhaps it was an inadequate interpretation which promised that it would be put into practice.⁷

*Philosophie, die einmal überholt schien, erhält sich am Leben, weil der Augenblick ihrer Verwirklichung versäumt ward. Das summarische Urteil, sie habe die Welt bloß interpretiert, sei durch Defaitismus der Vernunft, nachdem die Veränderung der Welt mißlang. Sie gewährt keinen Ort, von dem aus Theorie als solche des Anachronistischen, dessen sie nach wie vor verdächtig ist, konkret zu überführen wäre. Vielleicht langte die Interpretation nicht zu, die den praktischen Übergang verhielt.*⁸

Philosophy, in other words, has aimed at its own self-overcoming in the creation of a successful, satisfying form of life. From Plato and Aristotle to Marx, its *telos* was always the actualisation of the good or right life. However, the historical moment of self-actualisation never came to

fruition.⁹ For Adorno, the post-Auschwitz, late capitalist world of the 1960s *Bundesrepublik* (and indeed the Western world in general), with its inability to properly examine the past, its commodified social reality, its entrenched class relations, and its culture industry, mocked the very idea of rational social change. Philosophy, in other words, has failed. It has not managed to bring about, or even support, a rationally desirable form of social change. Even in our most sophisticated uses of reason, we are alienated from that which defines us as social beings. We find ourselves, as Kant would say, in a state of self-incurred immaturity.

However, Adorno's objection to philosophy is not just that its promise, as he writes, to be one with reality, to rationally stand behind our actual commitments, was betrayed (this would amount to the standard Marxist theory/*praxis* challenge, which is one of application or enlightened self-actualisation). It is also, and more fundamentally, that philosophy itself has not managed to establish the necessary critical distance from current social practice required for grounding and maintaining itself as a rationally self-authorising activity. *At best*, it has pointed in the wrong direction. *At worst*, rather than leading to change, the discourse of purportedly serious philosophy turns itself out to have been a reflection, or mode, of bad social practice. It has, Adorno repeatedly claims in *Negative Dialectics*, unreflectively succumbed to the deep-seated human instinct for self-preservation, the task of establishing conditions for the mere domination and control over the environment, the securing of order *via* a rationally arbitrary constitution of systems of classification and procedures of identification, without a proper concern for the role and integrity of the object of domination. This, again, means that reason has never been self-authorising and that immaturity rather than maturity has been our plight.

Crucially, though, in what appears to be a deeply modernist gesture, the only remaining task for the serious philosopher, having realised what his or her subject has become, is *to reflect on philosophy itself* – its account of reason, including dialectical thinking, and projection of the good – in the hope, specifically, of *rearticulating the demands of reason*. Philosophy – and one witnesses not only the modernist moment of rational self-authorisation but also the Kantian moment of *krinein*, of self-interrogation and self-analysis – needs to call itself radically into question: “Having broken its pledge to be as one with reality or at the point of realisation, philosophy is obliged ruthlessly to criticise itself. [*Nachdem Philosophie das Versprechen, sie sei eins mit der Wirklichkeit oder stünde unmittelbar vor deren Herstellung, brach, ist sie genötigt, sich selber rücksichtslos zu kritisieren.*]”¹⁰ In analogy with modernist artworks, the aim of *Negative Dialectics* is thus not to arrive at particular, first-order philosophical claims. Such claims, Adorno avers, would take the authority of philosophy and of “reason” for granted, and simply draw on that to establish philosophical insight. Rather, the aim should

be to ask *what it might mean to continue the project of philosophy, on what basis it may claim to possess authority in the first place. Philosophy becomes its own object and philosophical question.*

Negative Dialectics is thus a catalogue of what one might call “philosophical experiments”. While its overall aim is to locate some basis on which philosophy (despite its manifest failure as a rational anticipation of the good life) may be able to *continue* as a serious endeavour (something that Adorno would never conflate with mere institutional or academic survival), the rational basis on which it may purport to do so is itself *to be determined*. As Wittgenstein would agree when, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, he undermines the picture of rules as offering determinate guidance in every single step one takes, the continuation will *ipso facto* have to be without assurance, grounding, or rails.¹¹ It cannot appeal to any actually existing foundation or dogmatically accepted criteria.

Its only criterion of success, Adorno avers, is its capacity to do justice to that remainder, that otherness, that reason, in its traditional articulations of totality, has attempted to lay claim. In its own self-critique (which, again, cannot be based on a pre-given conception of reason), *it needs to locate the point at which it has not succeeded*, despite its (ultimately false) efforts, in “uniting subject and object”, “achieving objectivity”, and the like. Philosophy thus culminates in the exercise of “negative dialectics” – the attempt to reveal, rather than overcome, the *dis-unifications* (*Entzweiungen*, as the early Hegel called them) that contemporary social practice keeps effacing. It becomes, one might say, a form of radical ideology critique whereby our various modalities and practices of identification, sense-making, and conceptualisation, including those of academic philosophy, are subjected to critique.

Where traditional philosophy’s claim to intelligibility has rested on false appeals to objective truth and identity, the idea then is to call those appeals out, thereby revealing that *what seemed fully intelligible was not as intelligible as we thought it was*. When idealist philosophers, for example, argued for the identity of concept and object, Adorno’s procedure is to highlight how that identity is false. Rather than an identity, there is in experience a manifest non-identity between concept and object: *the object always transcends all our conceptual determinations*. Since no rule or foundation discloses this fact to us, we need in order to reintroduce full intelligibility to consult individual experience. Much of Adorno’s philosophical interest in aesthetics hinges on precisely this operation. Complex aesthetic experience serves the purpose of reflecting on reason and our actual practices of sense-making, calling for us to continue philosophising in a mode of perpetual self-reflection.

The neo-Kantian mode of philosophical self-reflection employed by contemporary rationalist thinkers such as Habermas, Robert Brandom, and Robert Pippin tends to centre on the questions of *validity* and *normativity* and involves the treatment of claims to validity as necessarily

subject to *reason-giving*. On this picture, reasons are construed as having the power to motivate agents rationally, bringing them to freely yet reflectively (and in that sense being oriented towards norms) take up particular stances, whether theoretical or practical. For philosophy to ground itself becomes tantamount to showing how it always already needs to rest on some sort of reason-giving. In some of these thinkers, like Habermas and Brandom, the act of reason-giving invites speculation regarding its possible non-inferential grounding. Indeed, Habermas has even formulated a quasi-foundationalist theory of argumentation.¹² In others, such as Pippin, reason-giving is a practice that lends itself to concerns about epistemic warrant and coherence but not to the grounding of the practice itself. Adorno, however, suspects that the emphasis on reason-giving as such is not going to be able to address the putative disfiguring of reason in modernity.

Indeed, the practice as such of giving and responding to reasons, while unquestionably a crucial and inevitable component of any account of rational behaviour, including that of Adorno, is itself indifferent to the formation and determination of concepts in our embodied, ongoing responsiveness to the world. Accordingly, when reason-giving *qua* rational practice enters the stage, it must be presupposed that the agent already possesses a cognitively successful access to whatever it is that is going to serve as evidence. In other words, experience, which opens the agent to the object and makes access to objects possible, is for Adorno a more fundamental concept than that of reason-giving. He therefore turns not to the Kantian orientation towards rational validity (and with that towards an account of judgement and reason-giving) but, rather, towards the more comprehensive interest, also Kantian, in laying bare *the complete structure of experience* [*Erfahrung*], where experience is supposed to involve the full interplay of conceptual *and* intuitional capacities. Unsurprisingly, it follows that an account of givenness becomes a crucial task.

It is at this point that Adorno reveals his commitment to what I would call an “immanent type of critique and self-reflection”. While opposing Kant’s ahistorical hypostatisation of the structure of thought, he follows Kant in holding that our intuition of objects, rather than being direct and foundational for experience (and hence for knowledge), is necessarily structured and mediated by the commitments and inferences that we already own up to:

There is no peeping out. What would lie in the beyond makes its appearance only in the materials and categories within. [*Man kann nicht hinaussehen. Was jenseits wäre, erscheint nur in den Materialien und Kategorien drinnen*].¹³

Judging, in other words, is an activity whereby an agent determines her stance vis-à-vis the world in light of certain normative proprieties.

To judge is not simply to be subjected to various causal processes (governed by empirical laws of thought) ensuing in the making of a judgement. Rather, it is to relate to an object in a self-relating, rational manner, whereby one freely, yet as normatively constrained by reasons and their normative presuppositions, takes one's judgement to be either valid or invalid. When Adorno, in the quote to which I just referred, seems to claim that intuitions are necessarily shaped or structured (the term he uses is the Kantian "*Erscheinung*") conceptually, he simply applies the apperception thesis (the thesis that thinking or experiencing X is only possible for an agent able to represent herself as the rationally responsive subject of the thought or experience) to the capacity for experiential intake.

No intuition can even begin to play an epistemic role unless the normative proprieties that come into play as we determine ourselves as holding X to be the case reach all the way to our intuitional confrontation with sensuous intake. The agent perceives that thus-and-so is the case insofar as she is rationally able to take herself *as* perceiving that thus-and-so is the case. Rather than a mere mental or, in a broader sense, psychological episode, to perceive is to "*perceive that*", and to "*perceive that*" is to judge, while judging itself is a rational, self-reflective, normatively structured capacity.¹⁴

The model of self-reflection that Adorno, on this construal, is applying would in certain respects be quite like that of Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. A complete reconstruction of Hegel's account of experience and self-reflection in that work would not be possible here. Suffice it to say that Hegel sets up successive models of how consciousness may relate to an object, each based on its own distinct notion [*Begriff*] of what counts as knowledge, and has each of them go through a process of self-reflection whereby its actual claims to knowledge are tested with reference to their capacity for offering the kind of knowledge promised by its notion. Sense-certainty, for example, the opening form of consciousness, fails on its own terms as it discovers that its notion (in this case a norm calling for *non-mediated givenness* as the mark of knowledge) cannot be cashed out in its actual epistemic pursuits. The notion or norm, generating incoherency as it is being applied to experience, turns out to be an alien presence in the subject, in need of replacement by a more adequate notion or norm, one that the agent is able to own up to, or be responsible for, making possible the satisfaction of their cognitive needs.

This immanent type of critique, I would argue, has a structure that we may recognise in much modernist discourse. Its ultimate aim is to bring an agent to the point of full self-disclosure and self-transparency – the point, one might say, at which the normative structuring of experience is no longer an alien presence but a set of constraints to which one is able to freely and rationally assent, a form, that is, of active self-determination.¹⁵ In Hegelian parlance, *this amounts to a form of rational identification*

with the fundamental conditions of one's own existence as a theoretical and practical agent. To be free is to attain a position of full being with oneself in otherness.

At this point in the reconstruction, an obvious objection arises. From only a very cursory reading of the opening sections of the introduction to *Negative Dialectics*, one finds Adorno claiming very emphatically that his own dialectic is supposed to differ substantively from that of Hegel. It is, he claims, intended to replace Hegel's "positive" dialectic, centred on the logically and teleologically structured resolution and *Aufhebung* of dialectical opposition, with a "negative" dialectic, centered on the *detection of division and disjunction*.¹⁶ How, then, can my sense that Adorno at least in part commits himself to the immanent dialectical self-critique exemplified by the *Phenomenology of Spirit* be reconciled with the fact that he seeks to distance himself from Hegel's own version of the dialectic?

On the immanentist, modernist view I outline here, the rejection of mediation and reconciliation does *not* involve a complete rejection of Hegel. The Adorno that emerges from this is a modernist reflection-theorist who thinks of Hegel's tendency to import teleological and dialectical-logical arguments into the process of self-reflection as being unjustified and unacceptable. Since the *modern* social systems within which we find ourselves so strongly ideologically (and hence "misleadingly") encourage us to believe that a successful and meaningful integration of notion and object, subject and object, has indeed taken place, the reconciliatory step towards *Aufhebung* should be resisted in favour of a focus on the *distance* between notional constraint and our ways of knowing and relating to the world. For Adorno, the dialectic has, as it were, been too successful for its own good. Rather than a process for which agents may take active responsibility, it has been performed, ideologically, by imperatives stemming ultimately from our animal nature as beings subject to a self-preservation instinct. For Adorno, what should be retained of the dialectical procedure is its emphasis on *negativity* – the articulation of the *misidentification* taking place of the object inside its current regime of notional identification. As he puts it:

Nonidentity is the secret *telos* of identification. It is the part that should be salvaged; the mistake in traditional thinking is that identity is taken for the goal. [*Insgeheim ist Nichtidentität das Telos der Identifikation, das an ihr zu rettende; der Fehler des traditionellen Denkens, daß es die Identität für sein Ziel hält*].¹⁷

The reflecting theorist finds that the world *is not* what we are told it is. It is *not* what our system of commodification seems to demand. The particulars in it are not mere instantiations of their general concept; nature is *not*, or not only, a resource, and so on.

In purely logical terms, such negations are, of course, *indeterminate*. While the modernist self-reflection model has been tremendously influential, especially within the left-Hegelian and Marxist tradition up to and including first-generation Frankfurt School Critical Theory, promising an ongoing dialectic of discoveries and insights, to know, as Adorno understands dialectics, that something is “not-X” is *not to know anything about what it is*. From a negation like this, anything can be logically inferred. It seems, as Adorno puts it, that all this procedure can achieve is to destroy the illusion of the object’s *So-Sein*, namely its immediate/unreflected self-identity:

The qualification of truth as a negative reaction on the part of the knowledge that penetrates the object – in other words: extinguishes the appearance of the object being directly as it is – sounds like a programme of negative dialectics as a knowledge ‘coinciding with the object.’ But the establishment of this knowledge as positivity abjures that programme. [*Die Qualifikation der Wahrheit als negatives Verhalten des Wissens, welches das Objekt durchdringt – also den Schein seines unmittelbaren Soseins auslöscht –, klingt wie ein Programm negativer Dialektik als des ‘mit dem Objekt übereinstimmenden’ Wissen; die Etablierung dieses Wissens als Positivität jedoch schwört jenes Programm ab.*]¹⁸

Yet is Adorno’s account of experience [*Erfahrung*] nothing else than an effort to relate objects dialectically to their concept – and then to demonstrate their non-identity to it? If so, his negative dialectic may sound as empty as some of his critics, including Habermas, have said that it is. Where can he find the ontological friction or epistemic constraint that would make his account of truth and knowledge more substantive? How, in other words, can the object of experience play a substantive role here? An objective idealist would look to the intuitions themselves and try to show that, because they are conceptually mediated, they provide mind-independent constraint on thought.¹⁹

However, Adorno, for whom our standing epistemic commitments are structured so as to *impose* conceptual content on our intuitions (this, for him, is the quasi-Lockean, quasi-Kantian “fact” about modern subjects), *cannot* seek refuge in objective idealism. *To do so would be to accept the ideological structuring of reality; it would involve a complete resignation.* For Adorno, our concepts do what King Midas did when his wish for ever more gold was granted him – they turn what’s *living and different*, yet potentially intimate, into a *dead, repetitive sameness*. Adorno therefore introduces a different yet much riskier and ultimately metaphysical model – and by “metaphysical” Adorno usually means something like “transcendence-oriented” – according to which *true reality is*

at least in part ineffable and recalcitrant to any standard mode of experiential intake.

A move like this resonates with older Platonic associations of reality with transcendence, a reality incomprehensible and inexplicable to proponents of mere belief (πίστις) concerning visible things, and, as Adorno makes clear in the final chapter of *Negative Dialectics*, with Kant's understanding of how the question of the "unconditioned" or "absolute" naturally arises for reason.²⁰ It most poignantly comes into play in the late Schelling's distinction between negative and positive philosophy, in light of which the latter is supposed to encircle the absolute, or God, independently of the merely negative movement of the dialectic.²¹

Like Adorno, Schelling argues that while dialectical reason in Hegel is successfully able to perform its negations – including the "negation of the negation" – it cannot account for, or ground, itself. Behind the manifest or appearing reality with which dialectical reason, as displayed in Hegel's idealist system of self-articulating immanence, deals, there must, from the point of view of reason, be a contingent reality exceeding the grasp of reason. For Schelling, this reality of "unprethinkable being" [*unvordenkliche Sein*] generates theological ideas of God as a self-dividing, essentially irrational being (a being, that is, which escapes conceptual and dialectical understanding). In Adorno, echoing not only Schelling but Marx as well, a similar commitment leads him to invoke "nature", and how nature is divided between being the object of man's labour and being *an sich* or absolute.²²

Schelling's break with the self-reflection model led Lukács, in *The Destruction of Reason*, to see his positive philosophy as originating a line of irrationalist thinking that included Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, various conceptions of *Lebensphilosophie*, Heidegger, as well as some of the most explicit articulations of fascist thought.²³ According to Lukács, these kinds of views, by showing that the self-reflection model does not yield authoritative knowledge of reality, and that whatever capacities it is supposed to comprise, it is not autonomous, involve a debunking of reason itself and its role in human life. Related to that, they also attempt to show that genuine moral, political, and epistemic authority stems from the exercise of non-rational, non-human powers such as *Wille*, *Macht*, *Sein*, *Leben*, and so on. In general, *they support a break with the project of modernity as it was defined by the Enlightenment*; and rather than subscribing to rational, collective self-determination as their ideal, they search for modes of self-actualisation that depend upon the right comprehension of our status as beings whose lives, despite all our attempts at repressing this fact, are structured by such powers.

In Habermas's 1985 *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, we find a similar assessment, and here we also detect an account of

Adorno in which he is said to have found that the supposed empty wanderings of his negative dialectic may only be brought to an end by declaring a commitment to a source of authority beyond the scope of reason itself.²⁴ According to Habermas, that source is by Adorno referred to as “nature”, and its mode of rightful access is that of “mimesis”.²⁵ This latter model seems indeed to find several expressions in *Negative Dialectics*. It appears to emerge in his doctrine of the preponderance of the object, which states that while an object can only be thought by a subject, it is always other or different than the content of thought; and it appears in the much older idea of natural history, with which he challenges Hegel’s *geistesphilosophische* account of history, and in the notion of *das Hinzutretende*, the addendum or “impulse”, to which he ascribes a motivating power operating independently of Kant’s abstract maxims.²⁶ It also plays a prominent role in his attempt to appropriate Benjamin’s various micrological procedures for interpreting, or disclosing, subversive “fragments” of historical and social practice.

The two apparent strands of *Negative Dialectics* may be impossible to square with one another. By justifying incompatible and mutually contradictory conclusions, they seem to produce an antinomy that interpreters have found to be not only puzzling but also *testifying to a deep ambivalence both about the status of modernity and perhaps about the anthropological parameters of human existence in general*. From one angle, and in one kind of mood, call it “cautiously optimistic”, Adorno appears to believe that philosophy *qua* critique can provide a genuine mode of ethical resistance to commodification and instrumentalisation. By performing immanent critique in the roughly Hegelian sense I have been outlining, *philosophy could be an instrument of liberation*.²⁷ From another angle, and in a decidedly darker mood, he seems, as Hermann Mörchen has urged, to share many of the sentiments informing Heidegger’s totalising critique of modernity, among them a sense of deep, and for all practical purposes, enigmatic and ineradicable alienation, as well as a demand, largely untranslatable in standard political terms (although Heidegger had more than a brush with real politics), for a total transformation of all relevant facets of social practice.²⁸

The two strands also explain the divide, politically, between his different kinds of audiences. There is the *socially Marxist yet politically mainly reformist* Adorno-reader. Then there is the *conservative, sometimes despairing, culturally oriented type* who laments commodification, the culture industry, and alienation, yet without any real hope of social change that matters, instead gesturing indeterminately towards some utopian, Messianic horizon. While the former type seems to thrive in the Anglo-American context, the latter type has been influential mainly on the European continent, informing, as already mentioned, much of the German reception of Adorno, including that of Habermas.

III

Adorno's Historical and Linguistic Approach to the Antinomy

Assuming there is textual basis for ascribing it to Adorno, how should one be dealing with this antinomy? Kant argued that in the absence of sufficient critical attention, reason cannot help generating antinomies.²⁹ However, he also believed he had a strategy, appealing to his transcendental idealism, for resolving them (especially the Third and Fourth Antinomies, i.e. the *dynamical* (rather than) *mathematical* antinomies). Transcendental idealism, with its distinction between the order of the thing in itself and the order of appearances, permits the rational co-existence of two, *equally* legitimate points of view: a human agent may consistently be regarded as both free and spontaneous *and* as subject to natural law.

Although we cannot *theoretically* prove to ourselves that we are noumenally free (that would exceed the horizon of possible objective experience), the *practical* notion that we actively determine ourselves according to law while at the same time being subject to natural law does not involve a contradiction, and, as Kant claims, for our moral life to make sense it is indispensable. In the *Science of Logic* and elsewhere, Hegel rejects this strategy, claiming that the antinomies of pure reason are in fact dialectical, calling for the insertion of Kant's antinomies into the wider and more complex framework of dialectical logic.³⁰

Neither the Kantian nor the Hegelian strategy seems open to Adorno. He is not a transcendental idealist *in the classical sense*. Moreover, the negative dialectical viewpoint that he recommends simply does not permit recourse to sublation and reconciliation: its aim, precisely, is to *demonstrate the incompatibility of the seemingly compatible* – to defend the object or the particular from the subject and its concept-mongering, subsumptive orientation. Moreover, as we have also seen, the only real candidate for such reconciliation is objective idealism, the view that our conceptual capacities reach all the way to our intuitions and necessarily determine those. As a result of his scepticism towards conceptuality as such and towards our actual vocabularies and practices (of false equivalence and instrumentalisation), none of which he considers exempt from possible ideological distortion, the objective idealist route, which one sees explored for instance in McDowell and Gadamer, is not open to Adorno.³¹

It seems, on the other hand, that a flat acceptance of the antinomy would not be satisfying either. It would violate a fundamental norm of reason and therefore make it hard if not impossible to rationally interpret the text. More importantly it would deprive Adorno of the deep historical framework in which he embeds the problem of a negative dialectic. Unlike Kant's antinomies, but in definite debt to Hegel's conceptual

oppositions, *the tensions and contradictions Adorno keeps articulating do not merely exist in some ahistorical space of reasons*, but are, as he puts it, a “social product [*gesellschaftliches Product*].”³²

In the finale to *Negative Dialectics*, “Meditations on Metaphysics”, Adorno provides a response to Kant’s distinction between the order of appearance and the order of the thing in itself that not only dovetails with the emphasis on history but suggests that he retains a historicised version of the antinomy that I have been discussing. Kant, he claims, offers a profoundly instructive yet ultimately flawed account of the ideas of reason and of the absolute. Driven by a desire to underwrite the rationale for adopting the so-called postulates of practical reason – the hope, most importantly (since Adorno discusses the fact of death), for immortality, which according to Kant is needed to make the highest good [*summum bonum*] intelligible as a rational aspiration – Kant not only draws a line between the unconditional and the conditioned but implicitly, through his claim that the postulate springs from a rational imperative, formulates the idea of at least the conceivability of some form of transcendence – a transcendence that Hegel, in his dialectic of the absolute as pure immanence, is said to betray. Kant, on the other hand, because of his staunchly *a priori* approach, hypostatizes the divide between the two orders, thereby failing to acknowledge the historical opportunities, however utopian, for its overcoming.

Where does all this reconstructive footwork take us? At least we seem closer to identifying Adorno’s real intentions. He pleads for the acceptance of the appearance/thing in itself distinction, and with that for the antinomy and strict duality of immanent and transcendent critique. At the same time, however, and in the spirit of a philosophy of history that not only sees empty repetition but moments of utopian, transgressive significance as well, he aims to articulate a form of experience that does indeed *challenge* the distinction. It is important not to underestimate the difficulties Adorno faces and how extremely circumscribed and perhaps self-defeating his philosophical path will have to be at this point. There can be no possible experience, he claims, that is wholly unmediated by concepts (and any claim to experience of the unmediated absolute is necessarily ideological); thus, only via the exercise of our conceptual capacities is a critical stance available. Undoubtedly, with this claim, the Adornian wager seems lost from the very beginning.

However, his next move is supposed to make him avoid the self-defeating consequences of his *highly qualified rationalism*. Without ever finding himself able to develop this conception into an argument, yet with great seriousness, Adorno introduces his much-discussed notion of *metaphysical experience* (and we should note here the deliberate subversion of Kant’s restriction thesis, the claim that objective experience is always indexed to appearances). In metaphysical experience, our conceptual capacities are held to have a potential for being employed in a

manner different *from standard modes of discrimination, individuation, and determinate judgement.*

In a gesture of almost Heideggerian defiance vis-à-vis the history of Western metaphysics, which has always seen reason alone as the faculty of metaphysical insight, Adorno rules out that the objects of such metaphysical experience could be essences or ideational content of some sort, requiring formulations, accounts, or descriptions involving general terms and concepts. Since generality for Adorno is the mark of immanence, the product of human acts of projection and subjective constitution, he instead decides to consider *sensuous particularity*, taken up by our conceptual faculty but left undistorted by it, as being the genuine object of metaphysical experience. On Adorno's materialist view there exists, in other words, a material substratum of experience that not only enjoys an epistemic priority (*Vorrang*) over the symbolic level (the level of "spirit") but, as I will explore in a moment, is supposed to be able to make a normative claim on us.

At this point, however, the following question suggests itself. Why is sensuous particularity not fully cognisable precisely via standard conceptual attribution? The particularity of an object – is that not what we determine when we make ordinary predications? If I say of an object that it has properties X, Y, and Z, have I not determined the object *qua* particular? Have I not precisely been able to bring conceptual language to adequately bear on experience? From his many attempts to defend, despite its potential for obfuscation, the critical integrity, or cognitive unavoidability, of conceptual determination, it may be inferred that Adorno would not deny that a particular object can be X, Y, or Z, where these are predicates picking out class-concepts. A ball is precisely that – a ball. Moreover, *this very object in front of me* is no doubt green or blue, etc. Metaphysical experience, however, hinges on the unlocking and disclosure of modes of significance and mattering not usually attended to – or, if attended to, reproduced in generalising modes of experiential uptake in which they are effaced or misrepresented. A different set of commitments, imported from the tradition of *nominalism*, must come into play: it is not enough that the object remains categorised in general terms.

Singular terms are supposed to refer exclusively to one object only. Adorno points to names, a sub-class of singular terms, arguing that they indeed may carry meaning and be able to express forms of significance that are unique to the singular object itself. Using village names from Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* as examples, he highlights their obscure yet palpable promise of happiness, and how, reminiscent of certain religious or aesthetic experiences, they serve to express a surplus of meaning irreducible to, yet not without relevance for, the everyday prose of propositional language:

Only in the face of absolute, indissoluble individuation can we hope that this, exactly this has existed and is going to exist; fulfilling this

hope alone would fulfill the concept of the concept. [*Einzig angesichts des absolut, unauflöslich Individuierten ist darauf zu hoffen, daß es genau dies schon gegeben haben und geben werde; dem nachzukommen erst erfüllte den Begriff des Begriffs.*]³³

Exactly what that “fulfillment” [*Erfüllung*] may amount to is far from clear as Adorno does subscribe to a strong division-thesis regarding the relationship between concepts and intuitions. While the term sounds phenomenological (indeed it forms the basis for Husserl’s theory of truth as intuitional adequation), inviting reflections on how propositional truth may be viewed as grounded in intuitive fulfillment of intentions, any serious interpretive approach needs to be balanced by the fact that Adorno flatly rejects Husserl’s theory of intentionality, claiming that it subjectivises truth.³⁴

A more promising take on his understanding of the formality-materiality relation would be to say that Adorno seeks to highlight the *dependence of truth on sensibilities irreducible to rules or conceptually mediated synthesis*. To speak intelligibly is ultimately grounded not just in regularities constitutive of sound conceptual practice but must also incorporate responsiveness to a level of sensuously presented significance, mediated by human embodiment in its social and historical existence. Epistemically responsible speech, for Adorno, is unguarded, open, intensely engaged with the world, yet never able to arrive at some definite point at which language tracks reality without remainder. We therefore must keep the following ideas in mind simultaneously: *there is no place where words can never go; yet the struggle to articulate is indefinite*. Cognitive activity, however, is both rational and purposive: while fleeting, there are moments of fulfillment [*Erfüllung*] that make our striving meaningful. These are somatic moments – moments of affect, but also of receptivity and vulnerability, in which a subject rejects its usual identity as ensconced in a mental space opposed to the world and comes to accept its embodied, and even corporal, nature from within. They are also, at least potentially, moments of aesthetic appreciation.

At this moment, Adorno claims, materialism coincides with theology: “[i]ts great desire would be the resurrection of the flesh, a desire utterly foreign to idealism, the realm of absolute spirit. [*Seine Sehnsucht wäre die Auferstehung des Fleisches; dem Idealismus, dem Reich des absoluten Geistes, ist sie ganz fremd.*]”³⁵

I started by suggesting that, on one rather plausible interpretation, it looks as though Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics* bifurcates into two, mutually exclusive, philosophical positions. On the one hand, I argued that *Negative Dialectics* translates into a model of self-reflection along Hegelian lines. Drawing both on Kant and Hegel, I called this Adorno’s “modernist” or “enlightenment orientation”. On the other hand, the

call for a form of responsiveness to the world that exceeds standard conceptual grasp leads in Adorno's case to a demand for a different and, as I called it, "anti-modernist", "anti-enlightenment" orientation. Drawing on Schelling and his distinction between negative and positive philosophy, I saw this as geared towards some form of transcendence, suggestive of sources of authority existing outside of what standard exercises of rationality among purportedly autonomous subjects may claim to grasp.

Readers of Adorno may not be all that surprised by this bifurcation. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer famously seek both to rescue some notion of reason (rejecting all attempts to *relinquish* the value of being committed to reason) and to critique reason in its *de facto* form. They express shock and dismay at current manifestations of irrationality. At the same time, they draw on anti-Enlightenment thinkers, such as Nietzsche, to perform their critique of reason. It seems that the tension between modernism and anti-modernism has been there all along.

Have I been able to resolve the problem of the two strands in Adorno? Hardly. I continue to believe that *accepting the tension between these strands* – and, as I briefly outlined, searching for a way to see it as philosophically fruitful and worth paying sustained attention to – should be crucial for anyone seeking to understand his mature philosophy. I have tried, however, to outline reasons for thinking that, despite appearances, we should resist the notion of there being two *separate* philosophies at play here. The self-reflection model and the metaphysical model, immanent and transcendent criticism, modernism and anti-modernism, complement each other and make sense only in their mutual and difficult relation to each other. They represent dialectical parts of a non-unified, historical field. That said, their conflicting co-existence also animates much of Adorno's intellectual work and is crucial for a proper understanding of the *Negative Dialectics*.

Notes

1. Unfortunately, the English translation has proven to be notoriously unreliable. I will, therefore, be making references to the original German text (*Negative Dialektik* (1982)).
2. I am referring to Jürgen Habermas's influential reading (viz. Habermas 1984: 382).
3. See, for example O'Connor (2004).
4. For a perceptive account of Adorno's reading of Heidegger, see Gordon (2016).
5. See, for example Baumann (2011) and Giladi (2015, 2017).
6. Kant (2005: 54).
7. Adorno (1973: 3).
8. Adorno (1982: 15).
9. Marx (1994: 118): "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in different ways; the point is to *change* it".

10. Adorno (1973: 3, 1982: 15).
11. Exactly how Wittgenstein works this out is of course a long and complicated story that cannot be told here. A very brief summary would focus on the idea that the possession of a concept requires a sensibility, not reducible to the following of a pre-given rule, whereby speaker is able to project the concept intelligibly into ever new contexts. For an illustration of this anti-rationalist thought, see, for example Wittgenstein (1953: §219): ‘“All the steps are really already taken” means: I no longer have any choice. The rule, once stamped with a particular meaning, traces the lines along which it is to be followed through the whole of space. – But if something of this sort really were the case, how would it help? No; my description only made sense if it was to be understood symbolically. – I should have said: *This is how it strikes me*. When I obey a rule, I do not choose. I obey the rule blindly”.
12. See Habermas (2001).
13. Adorno (1973: 140, 1982: 143).
14. In recent times, this point has been strongly emphasised by John McDowell. See McDowell (1994).
15. This, precisely, seems to be what “absolute knowledge” amounts to in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. For more on this point, see Pinkard (1994: ch. 6).
16. For Adorno’s most extended studies and critique of the nature of Hegel’s dialectic, see Adorno (1993, 2017).
17. Adorno (1973: 149, 1982: 152).
18. Adorno (1973: 160, 1982: 162–163).
19. John McDowell views himself as an objective idealist along these lines. So does the Hegelian thinker Robert Pippin. See Pippin (2015: 159–172).
20. Adorno (1973: 385): “The Kant of *Critique of Pure Reason* said in the doctrine of ideas that theory without metaphysics is not possible. The fact that it *is* possible implies that metaphysics has its justification, the justification advanced by the same Kant whose work effectively crushed metaphysics”; Adorno (1982: 377): “*Der Kant der Vernunftkritik hat in der Ideenlehre ausgesprochen, ohne Metaphysik sei Theorie nicht möglich. Daß sie aber möglich ist, impliziert jenes Recht der Metaphysik, an dem der gleiche Kant festhielt, der sie, durch die Wirkung seines Werkes, zerschmetterte*”.
21. Schelling discusses the distinction between negative and positive philosophy in a number of different texts. A relatively accessible account can be found in Schelling (2007).
22. For what remains the best study of the development of this topic from Schelling’s critique to Hegel and Marx, see Frank (1992). Adorno rehearses the distinction between historical and ahistorical nature in various contexts.
23. See Lukács (1980).
24. See Habermas (1987).
25. Habermas (1984: 382): “As the placeholder for this primordial reason that was diverted from the intention of truth, Horkheimer and Adorno nominate a capacity, *mimesis*, about which they can speak only as they would about a piece of uncomprehended nature. They characterise the mimetic capacity, in which an instrumentalised nature makes its speechless accusation, as an ‘impulse’”.
26. For the account of the addendum, see Adorno (1973: 226–230, 1982: 226–230).
27. Brian O’Connor, a leading Adorno scholar, sees Adorno as being engaged exclusively with immanent critique. See O’Connor (2013: 48): “Adorno is influenced in his formulation of the very idea of immanent critique by Hegel’s

notion of ‘determinate negation’. In Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* determinate negation is a productive negation which emerges from the experience of failure”. O’Connor acknowledges that, rather than moving beyond them in thinking, Adorno primarily seeks to reveal contradictions embedded in history. This means that there is room for recognising some indeterminate norms (O’Connor mentions freedom and happiness) and hence for providing a transcendent perspective on historical reality. However, for O’Connor this transcendence is not “metaphysical”. As opposed to what I take Adorno to be in the business of doing, it would not involve a transcendence of historical reality itself. I firmly believe that part of Adorno’s critique of Hegel has to do with rejecting a view of history as absolute. For Hegel, history (insofar as it develops *Geist*) is precisely absolute. From his very first attempts in philosophy, Adorno, however, wanted to relativise that notion and see “nature” (or transcendence) as being opposed to history.

28. See Mörchén (1981).

29. CPR Aviii: “Human reason has the peculiar fate in one species of its cognitions that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it as problems by the nature of reason itself, but which it also cannot answer, since they transcend every capacity of human reason. Reason falls into this perplexity through no fault of its own. It begins from principles whose use is unavoidable in the course of experience and at the same time sufficiently warranted by it. With these principles it rises (as its nature also requires) ever higher, to more remote conditions. But since it becomes aware in this way that its business must always remain incomplete because the questions never cease, reason sees itself necessitated to take refuge in principles that overstep all possible use in experience, and yet seem so unsuspecting that even ordinary common sense agrees with them. But it thereby falls into obscurity and contradictions, from which it can indeed surmise that it must somewhere be proceeding on the ground of hidden errors; but it cannot discover them, for the principles on which it is proceeding, since they surpass the bounds of all experience, no longer recognise any touchstone of experience”.

30. The dialectical interpretation of Kantian antinomies is central to Hegel’s whole *Logik*. In Hegel (SL: 67) for example, discussing the antinomy of being and nothing, Hegel writes that “these propositions (the propositions expressing the truth of being or nothing) are disconnected and therefore present their content only in an antinomy, whereas the content refers to one and the same thing, and the determinations expressed in the two propositions should be united absolutely – in a union which can then only be said to be an *unrest* of simultaneous *incompatibles*, a *movement*. The commonest injustice done to a speculative content is to render it one-sidedly, that is, to give prominence only to one of the propositions in which it can be resolved”.

31. McDowell (1994: 26): “*That things are thus so* is the content of the experience, and it can also be the content of a judgement: it becomes the content of a judgement if the subject decides to take the experience at face value. So it is conceptual content. But *that things are thus and so* is also, if one is not misled, an aspect of the layout of the world: it is how things are. Thus the idea of conceptually structured operations of receptivity puts us in a position to speak of experience as openness to the layout of reality. Experience enables the layout of reality to exert a rational influence on what a subject thinks”. See also Gadamer (2004: 435–467).

32. Adorno (1973: 389, 1982: 382).

33. Adorno (1973: 373–374, 1982: 366).

34. Cf. Adorno (2013).

35. Adorno (1973: 207, 1982: 207).

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2 Unsocial Society

Adorno, Hegel, and Social Antagonisms

Borhane Blili-Hamelin and Arvi Särkelä

“Man to Man is an arrant Wolfe”.
(Hobbes, *De Cive*)

“As long as there is still one beggar around, there will still be myth”.
(Benjamin, *Arcades Project*)

Adorno’s critical appropriation of Hegel’s theory of civil society shapes his way of addressing the very core question of his critical theory of society: “Why do social crises not lead to social transformation?” According to Adorno, Hegel’s diagnosis of the antagonistic structure of civil society foreshadows his own diagnosis of the way modern welfare states silence crises of legitimacy. Our chapter investigates the philosophical innovations at the heart of Hegel’s and Adorno’s respective approaches to the problems revealed by the antagonisms of civil society.

At the center of Hegel’s account of civil society lies the question of the relationship between the legitimacy of a social order, the antagonisms it contains, and the unity of the social fabric. Hegel examines how a radically pluralistic approach to happiness and its protection is key to the possibility of a form of social unity that can heal social antagonisms. At the centre of Adorno’s critical theory of society lies the problem of *Bannkreis*: “Why do individuals systematically act in ways that reinforce conditions that are obviously incompatible with their happiness and freedom?” “*Bann*” is Adorno’s concept for those conditions that, as if by a magical spell, shape them into doing so. “*Bannkreis*” is his concept for the vicious circle by which those conditions are reproduced. The substantive issue of this chapter is to contribute to a nuanced understanding of these problems. Its historical issue is to make that understanding more nuanced by examining Adorno’s account of *Bannkreis* together with its roots in Hegel’s theory of civil society.

We will do this by investigating the following specific questions:

1. How does Hegel conceive of the antagonistic structure of civil society?
2. How does Hegel conceive of the way civil society addresses crises of

legitimacy? 3. How does Adorno think of the way modern welfare states silence crises of legitimacy? 4. How does Adorno's conception of *Bannkreise* aim to illuminate the root structure of how all antagonistic societies silence crises of legitimacy?

Designating terms as standing in opposition (*Gegensatz*) is to say that they are irreducibly incongruent with each other: we might say, interactions among opposites is zero-sum,¹ such that more of the one irreducibly involves less of the other and *vice versa*. In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel treats positive and negative magnitudes as one of the paradigm cases of opposition. Of note, designating terms as standing in opposition leaves open the question of whether they are indeed interacting with each other, and thus, incurring loss on each other. Further context must be added to determine whether a given pair of opposites also affect one another.

For our purposes, we can think of antagonism (and *Streit*, *Widerstreit*, *Kampf*) as a specific mode of mutually lossy relation among opposites: where the *relation* takes the form of an active, dynamic *process*. In contemporary terms, we can think of a zero-sum game as one of the paradigm cases of antagonism. By contrast, the arithmetic operation of addition on $+c$ and $-c$ is arguably static. For our purposes here, describing the operation of addition as a conflict, struggle, or antagonism between opposites would be misguided.

In Adorno's theory of society, one finds antagonisms between several different elements. First, there are the antagonisms between *social groups*.² Second, he theorises antagonistic interactions between *sectors* of society.³ A part of Adorno's story about the co-existence of rationality and irrationality in the social totality is that while these groups are capable of acting intentionally and rationally and the sectors are loci of rational planning, the *social totality* made up of their antagonistic interactions remains largely irrational. Third, society can involve antagonisms *within individuals*.⁴ Society's antagonisms continue into the interactions of the individual's drives, impulses, and habits. Finally, there is the antagonism between social power and social powerlessness.⁵ This is the basic antagonism in Adorno's social theory.

Similarly, in Hegel, we find antagonisms in the shape of the life and death struggle in the *Phenomenology*; the conflict between human law and divine law; the conflict between faith and reason in the Enlightenment; the conflict of the Reign of Terror between the freedom initially sought by the French Revolution and the contingent asymmetries in power and authority of the post-revolutionary social structures; and the battles over right and wrong that threaten the social fabric of the community of conscience. But, as we will argue, there is also a basic antagonism at work in his late social theory: between the unity of the social whole and the welfare of its individual members.

I

Adorno on Hegel on Organic Totality

A surprising and provocative claim in Adorno's interpretation of Hegel is that the latter's great achievement (or one of them at least) is to have grasped society as an *organic totality*. Underlying this claim are three sets of commitments that Adorno extracts from Hegel and goes on to defend as building blocks of his own version of a critical theory of society: he claims that Hegel 1. revealed – however implicitly – spirit as society organised through division of labour; 2. conceived this social organisation through the category of “organic totality”; and 3. conceptualised such totalities as *antagonistic* through and through.

1. Adorno's claim that Hegel revealed spirit as society organised through division of labour is less a claim about the manifest content of Hegel's social ontology. It pertains rather to the results of Adorno's immanent critique of Hegel. Counter to Hegel's own idealism, so goes Adorno's reading that Hegel reveals society as the substratum of spirit. This means for Adorno that, on the one hand, Hegel's concept of spirit helps to articulate that of society. On the other hand, that articulation includes showing how the concept of spirit is itself, already in Hegel, at least implicitly one of society.

First, then, Hegel's concept of spirit serves as a model for conceptualising society: like spirit, society presents a process that makes itself universal by persisting in and through its individual elements. It mediates those elements, makes itself their “essence”. As Adorno writes:

Society is allotted precisely what Hegel reserves for spirit as opposed to all the isolated individual moments of empirical reality. Those moments are mediated by society, constituted the way things are constituted by spirit for an idealist. . . : society is manifested in phenomena the way, for Hegel, essence is manifested in them.

(Adorno 1993: 19–20)

But Adorno knits the connection between spirit and society tighter than these analogies. Hegelian spirit, Adorno argues, is already implicitly society, in the sense of presenting a universal constituted by social division of labour. The way in which something like spirit emerges through mediation from its elements involves an activity on the part of the individual *for others*, *according* to an established standard. Now, such an activity for others under a criterion of equivalence is *labour*. Spirit's

universality is an expression of the social nature of labour, an expression both precise and concealed from itself for the sake of the general

idealist thesis; labour only becomes labour as something for something else, something commensurable with other things, something that transcends the contingency of the individual subject.

(Adorno 1993: 18)

The first aspect, then, of Hegel's social ontology that Adorno wishes to preserve as a moment of his critical social theory is the commitment to society as a universal that socially mediates itself through the interactions of its individual elements.

2. The second aspect is the *speculative claim*: "Society is essentially concept, just as spirit is".⁶ Throughout his sociological writings and lectures, Adorno emphatically defends the view that society cannot be reduced to individual empirical social facts.⁷ This view is speculative precisely in the Hegelian sense of assuming a perspective which is set principally above the elementary facts. Only from that perspective can the full meanings of individual facts themselves be disclosed:

For while the notion of society may not be deduced from any individual facts, nor on the other be apprehended as an individual fact itself, there is nonetheless no social fact which is not determined by society as a whole. Society appears as a whole behind each concrete situation.

(Adorno 1965: 145)

The meaning of individual social facts is then constituted by their mediation through the social totality. This speculative Hegelian dimension can be seen at work in Adorno's many sociological studies that operate as "social physiognomy": Adorno deciphers the way in which the social totality appears in empirical social phenomena by making itself inhere in them. This puts Adorno squarely at the centre of the positivism dispute in German sociology.⁸ In these debates, he often refers explicitly to Hegel⁹ and even argues that German sociology itself emerged as a speculative science out of Hegelian philosophy and ought to embrace its own origin.¹⁰

3. The most striking of Adorno's claims about Hegel's conception of social wholes concerns the particular *way* in which the totality makes itself inhere in its elements so as to maintain its form. As we have already seen, Adorno thinks that Hegel's category of organic totality helps to conceptualise society through speculative judgements as a universal that persists by its mediation in its individual elements, by making itself inhere in them. But, his affirmative reception of Hegel goes further than this. Hegel has, as Adorno argues, a correct account of *how* that mediation operates: Hegelian organic totalities are reproduced *through antagonisms*. To quote Adorno:

Hegel recognised the primacy of the whole over its finite parts, which are inadequate and, in their confrontation with the whole,

contradictory. But he neither derived a metaphysics from the abstract principle of totality nor glorified the whole as such. . . . He does not make the parts, as elements of the whole, autonomous in opposition to it; at the same time, as a critic of romanticism, he knows that the whole realises itself only in and through the parts, only through discontinuity, alienation, and reflection. . . . If Hegel's whole exists at all it is only as the quintessence of the partial moments, which always point beyond themselves and are generated from one another; it does not exist as something beyond them. This is what his category of totality is intended to convey. It is incompatible with any kind of tendency to harmony.

(Adorno 1993: 4)

Contrary to what one might expect from a critical theorist, Adorno does not ascribe a harmonistic view of social reproduction to Hegel.¹¹ He never claims that the German idealist presents a social holism of a supra-agential spirit generating a happy social whole behind the backs of the individuals. On the contrary, he sees it as Hegel's great achievement to have accounted for an *antagonistic* mode of the reproduction of social wholes: "Civil society is an antagonistic totality. It maintains itself only in and through its antagonisms and is not able to resolve them".¹²

Now, this aspect of Hegel's social ontology is preserved in Adorno's critical theory of society as an important resource of his diagnostic social critique. This is clearly expressed in the provocative statement that Hegel's conception of organic totality has posthumously been actualised as the shape of Western postwar society:

[s]atanically, the world as grasped by the Hegelian system has only now, a hundred and fifty years later, proved itself to be a system in the literal sense, namely that of a radically socialised society.

(Adorno 1993: 27)

Hegel's category of organic totality enables Adorno to represent society in the dystopian shape of a blindly and painfully self-perpetuating whole. It informs his diagnoses of the "socialised society" (*vergesellschaftete Gesellschaft*) and the "administered world" (*verwaltete Welt*). It explains *conceptually* how society can be said to (blindly) maintain its form without society-wide rational planning or collective intentionality, and why crises of that whole do not lead to its transformation.

Yet, in what sense can it be said that civil society is antagonistic for Hegel? How does Hegel conceive of the way civil society addresses fundamental crises?

II

*Hegel on the Antagonistic Structure of Civil Society*1. *Approaching Civil Society's Antagonisms*

The framework we adopt for thinking about the place of antagonism in Hegel's account of civil society is unusual in two respects. On the one hand, our target is atypically *narrow*: we are interested in the distinctive innovations of civil society's approach to antagonisms – the very innovations that motivate Adorno's intense focus in Hegel's account of civil society in particular, rather than the *Philosophy of Right's* account of the political state, or, more to the point, rather than any of the many accounts of antagonisms that remain among the most potent accomplishments of the *Phenomenology*. What is so special about the way Hegel's account of civil society engages with antagonisms?

On the other hand, our framework is informed by an atypically *wide* background diagnosis of the range of questions and strategies Hegel's mature works deploy in dealing with antagonisms. One of the most unusual aspects of Hegel's mature project is its maximally comprehensive perspective on the problem-space and solution-space of painful, destructive antagonisms. Within the social philosophy tradition, there is a reasonable temptation to zero in on social conflicts (be they between individuals or groups) as a topic to be dealt with in their own terms. As we read him, Hegel's mature project is rooted in the thought that painful, destructive antagonisms are a threat to our humanity in every context where issues of legitimacy, authority, and validity are at play. As he powerfully puts it in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, even the ever-common refusal to discuss matters of conviction with those who do not share them “*tramples the roots of humanity underfoot*”.¹³

For Hegel, there is a red-hot through line from Hobbes's “war of all against all” that framed so much of the social contract tradition's approach to questions of political legitimacy, to Kant's diagnosis of metaphysics as a “battlefield of endless controversies” that framed so much of the post-Kantian struggle with questions of rational legitimacy.¹⁴ The point is not that the significance, process, and effects of metaphysical disputes is anything like those of lawless conflict over scarce resources. Hegel's approach doesn't attempt to flatten crucial differences among antagonisms of different kinds. Conflicts of all sorts can be symptoms of crises in legitimacy, of structural shortcomings in the shared frameworks that make just, legitimate conflict resolution possible – if at all. Such crises threaten our humanity – and anything like freedom – because power, domination, violence, and coercion risk becoming the only way to settle antagonisms.

Axel Honneth argues that an important shortcoming of Hegel's approach to antagonism, from the *Phenomenology* onward, is its metaphysical underpinnings: his account being "tainted by metaphysical premises that can no longer be easily reconciled with contemporary thought".¹⁵ With the caveat that how to best understand Hegel's metaphysics remains one of the liveliest and most fruitful debates in Hegel scholarship, we see this diagnosis as a largely accurate description both of Hegel's approach and our contemporary situation – it involves quite a bit of metaphysics, much of which is a poor fit for current philosophical sensibilities. However, our view is that understanding the innovations of Hegel's approach to antagonisms requires asking a different question: "what range of tools is Hegel bringing to bear on the threat antagonisms pose in all aspects of human experience?" In the context of the *Philosophy of Right's* account of civil society, Hegel's metaphysics will prove to be among these tools. Our approach resists pre-judgement of what we might learn from Hegel's innovations before doing our very best to listen to what they have to say.

2. The Antagonisms of Civil Society

What Hegel calls "civil society" combines a market economy, a legal system, as well as public and private bodies (roughly) tasked with containing the risks the market economy poses to the survival and welfare of individuals. Civil society operates on two basic principles: that (i) each member of civil society is a "concrete person" (*konkrete Person*),¹⁶ an embodied totality of needs and capacities, with the authority to choose for herself,¹⁷ from her own subjective point of view, what needs and resources are worth pursuing to her; and that (ii) each member of civil society pursues their respective needs and resources through lawful participation in a market economy. Minimally, adult members participate in the market economy as buyers; but for the majority of able adults, participation in the market economy is also by way of acquiring the resources they seek to fulfill their needs – be it as workers, entrepreneurs, investors, etc.

The most obvious and thoroughgoing sense in which civil society involves antagonism is through market competition. Hegel does not underplay the thoroughly antagonistic aspect of market competition:

civil society is the battlefield of all individual private interest against all (*Kampfplatz des individuellen Privatinteresses aller gegen alle*).

(EPR: §289A – translation modified)

Hegel appreciated the potent tools of market coordination (at least under some conditions) in transforming competition over market opportunities, from its seemingly zero-sum outward appearance, into outcomes

that benefit all – the so-called “invisible hand” of market coordination. Let us imagine that the most *naïve market optimism* is true: market economies flawlessly and consistently deliver outcomes that are beneficial to all. Even under naïve market optimism, it remains the case that the activity of those engaged in competing over market opportunities has an antagonistic form. For instance, for organisations to engage in a bidding war to hire the present chapter’s authors would truly take the form of a zero-sum game: for one organisation to win the bidding war would imply that its competitors lost. If naïve market optimism is true, on the whole, over time, each organisation and each job seeker would benefit from their participation in the labour market. So, on the whole, over time, the labour market would be consistently positive sum for all involved. Regardless, competition over jobs and competition over candidates take the form of an antagonistic interaction. Market competition is a battlefield!

Like many other proponents of market economies, Hegel does not directly take issue with the antagonistic form of market competition. Coming to terms with the value he sees in market competition requires us to dig much deeper into his innovative take on the normative foundation of civil society. As a first step in that direction, we need to engage with his diagnosis of the most catastrophic antagonism civil society might incur: the emergence of a *rabble*.

Hegel is not only concerned with the damage poverty incurs to individuals’ material security: whether they have the resources to provide for even their most basic needs.¹⁸ He is also attentive to the subjective ravages of poverty.¹⁹ Severe material insecurity damages one’s aspirations, expectations, and motivations, one’s sense of self-worth and dignity: it risks disenfranchising individuals not only from any reasonable hope that one might find anything like a satisfying life by pursuing resources and goods through the market economy;²⁰ but also from trust in the social fabric and its shared institutions more broadly. Hegel is no optimist about free markets’ capacity to mitigate the risk that many individuals might fall into abject poverty. Rather, his account considers it dangerously likely that the chaos of market distribution might throw a large group into poverty so extreme as to form a radically disenfranchised underclass, a “rabble” (*Pöbel*).²¹ What catastrophic antagonisms does the formation of a rabble involve?

Mass disenfranchisement is catastrophically antagonistic on its face: it means that a large group has been robbed of the opportunity to harmoniously partake in the common good. To see how deep such a crisis cuts for the legitimacy of the entire social order, it is crucial to understand Hegel’s conception of the mode of existence of social orders (“states” in the broad sense of an *entire* social order’s basic institutions), namely all the institutions that play an essential role in sustaining that social order’s existence (here, civil society, the family, and the centralised institutions of

government). For Hegel, a social order's existence irreducibly depends on its members' conceiving of themselves as members of its essential institutions. The mode of existence of a social order, its "reality", is "self-conscious individuals".²² More precisely, a social order exists through the essential, constitutive role it plays in the self-consciousness of its members.²³

For Hegel, a crucial feature that sets social orders (and rational processes) apart from artifacts and tools (what Hegel calls "external purposiveness") is that they have the power to bring about and sustain their own existence. In the language of contemporary complexity theory, we might say that Hegel thinks of social orders as *self-organising*: as generating and sustaining their own functional unity. Neither the grand piano nor its parts have the interest and power to make themselves function like a grand piano. Not only are makers and designers needed to create grand pianos in the first place; but tremendous skill and craft must repeatedly be brought to the piano to keep it functioning, not just well, but – eventually – at all. A social order that does not have the power to generate and sustain its own functional unity is *dead*.²⁴ As Hegel metaphorically puts it, its "soul and body would have come apart".²⁵

The formation of a rabble involves a significant group of citizens altogether ceasing to partake in sustaining the social order's unity. Even if the disenfranchised group gets the rare chance to be left alone by the social order, their disenfranchisement is still in *conflict* with the social order's power to sustain its own unity: the more people get disenfranchised, the less power the social order has over its own sustained existence. In sum, there is a fundamental antagonism between any significant disenfranchisement and a social order's self-organising power. In leading to the disenfranchisement of its members, a social order pillages its own self-organising power.

In practice, large disenfranchised groups tend to be met with state violence. The violation of being robbed of the possibility of partaking in the common good is typically met with the injury of coercive, violent subjection to the edicts of the social order. Fully appreciating the distinct kind of antagonism at play here is vital for our investigation.

Hegel maintains that the happiness (*Glück*), and more specifically the welfare (*Wohl*) of its members is of paramount importance to the (self-organised) unity of any social order. A simplistic but helpful starting point is the thought the happiness of its members affects a social order's *stability*: that unhappy members tend to be the source of uncertainty and disruption for a social order's unity, of social unrest, and sometimes even of revolutions. This simplistic consideration would make the question of whether to rely on coercion and violence to preserve social unity a matter of effectiveness: it would contend that the problem with a social order pillaging and exploiting the quality of life of its members for preserving itself is that it does not work well.

On our view, this misses the core of Hegel's conception of social unity – the kind of unity characteristic of *Sittlichkeit*. Unlike the simplistic stability view, Hegel conceives of the unity of social orders (their “ethical substantiality”) as constitutively connected with their legitimacy, and with the recognition of that legitimacy by its members. A social order that lacks legitimacy thereby warrants its reflective rejection by its members: it rationally motivates the opposite of the recognition of its legitimacy.²⁶ To be sure, factors like inertia, group think, misinformation, pre-emptive silencing, or outright violent suppression of dissent might well succeed in preventing anyone from objecting to the social order's legitimacy.²⁷ But a social order that even merely implicitly warrants rejection of its legitimacy thereby undermines the distinctive kind of unity that makes it a social order at all (what Hegel calls “ethical substantiality”): it is rather a fundamentally unsocial society.

A key part of the background to this point is arguably Hegel's conception of the unity of social orders as irreducibly dependent on *recognition*: on the complex social dynamics through which the self-conception and self-worth of each and of all (the group) are jointly shaped, articulated, embodied, and lived. We might say a social order that does not both serve the collective good and the good of each falls short of fully self-organising its own recognition. Its members may contingently happen to recognise its legitimacy, but that recognition would remain heterogeneous: the social order's unity would be subjected to the rule of irrational luck – the luck of not being duly recognised as unworthy of recognition by its members. For Hegel, the only non-blindly lucky, the only *free* and self-determining way of sustaining social unity is through a social order proving itself to be genuinely worthy of its members' recognition. Besides the more obvious antagonism between disenfranchisement proper and the social order's power over its unity, this line of thought suggests a deeper fault line all social orders' violations of the good of each of its members breach: an antagonism between the illegitimacy of a social order and its self-determination.

A delicate question concerns the extent to which the self-determination of a social order (and rational processes more generally) requires eliminating luck and contingency from its unity. The approach we favour takes Hegel to reject the possibility of eliminating the influence of luck and contingency on the course of any worldly process, including social orders.²⁸ We take Hegel to prioritise the connection between a social order's self-determination and its legitimacy.

A proposal we see as especially promising takes its cue from the *Phenomenology*'s suggestion that a fully self-determining configuration of objective spirit would not be one that altogether eliminates antagonisms over legitimacy.²⁹ It would rather be one whose dynamics always have the fragile power to right the wrongs that would turn antagonisms over legitimacy into full blown crises of legitimacy. Hegel describes that fragile

power with the metaphor of a mythical weapon that alone has the power to heal the wounds it inflicts.³⁰ The metaphor suggests that the weapon can and does inflict potentially lethal wounds in the first place. It also suggests that its mythical healing power might not always be *used* to heal its lethal wounds.

One of the core questions of Hegel's account of *Sittlichkeit* is what feature of social orders makes them vulnerable to crises of legitimacy. The account of civil society puts the spotlight on one source of such crises: violations of the good of each, violations of what he calls the "right of individuals to their particularity".³¹ The emergence of a rabble means that a social order has *catastrophically failed* to right its self-inflicted wrongs.

3. *Civil Society's Impossible Task: Social Unity, Welfare, and Bildung*

Adorno's charge that "[c]ivil society . . . maintains itself only in and through its antagonisms and is not able to resolve them"³² raises a crucial question that we are now in a position to tackle. We saw the seemingly trivial sense in which civil society is antagonistic: namely that *competition over market opportunities* gives an antagonistic surface structure to the interaction of members of civil society; an antagonistic surface structure that remains operative even where the invisible hand of the markets serves the good of each as well as market optimists hope. That point falls well short of giving any bite to Adorno's claim that civil society is "not able to resolve" its antagonisms. We noted that Hegel himself is no market optimist: he considers it likely that the sole mechanisms of market coordination of supply and demand might at times catastrophically fail to transform the surface of market competition into shrouded cooperation beneficial to all. The most obvious case of such catastrophic failure that Hegel considers is the formation of a rabble. It is also the most straightforward context in which Adorno's charge arguably lands: Hegel's account of the resources at civil society's disposal in "resolving" the catastrophic failure of the emergence of a rabble is underwhelming, perhaps worse.³³

We should not be so quick to pin Adorno's interest in the antagonisms of civil society primarily on the case of the rabble. The emergence of a rabble would make a clear candidate for an antagonism that civil society is "not able to resolve". But it is far less promising as a candidate for an antagonism that civil society "maintains itself in and through".

As we saw, Adorno takes Hegel's account of the antagonisms of civil society to be an exceptional source of insight into the essential mechanisms of even the most progressive modern welfare states. Our focus in the remainder of the present section will be on the innovative aspect of Hegel's account of the antagonisms of civil society that we see as the most

promising candidate for thinking through Adorno's praise, as well as his own innovations in departing from Hegel.

As part of its task of protecting the good of each individual, civil society is tasked with protecting not merely their right to life (to subsistence [*Subsistenz*]); it must also protect the right to welfare (*Wohl*) of each individual.³⁴ Roughly, welfare is an individual's satisfaction with her quality of life; where that individual's own embodied point of view is the arbiter and authority on what counts as a satisfying, meaningful life by her lights; and where she is, thereby, the authority on what *needs and resources* to pursue as part of pursuing a satisfying life.³⁵ The notion of welfare is closely related to that of happiness (*Glückseligkeit/Glück*); with the qualification that whereas *happiness* can have a merely psychological status, *welfare* needs as something an individual has a *claim* and *right* to, as having a normative status.³⁶

Now, civil society, by design, makes the achievement of welfare *uncertain* and *risky* for each of its members. For Hegel, that risk and uncertainty is a design feature of requiring individuals to pursue their own welfare through a market economy: competition over market opportunities is irreducibly uncertain. So is any individual's success in securing the resources required for her to sustain a life she sees as satisfying and worth living.

Why would the institution whose task is to protect the right to welfare *also* make the pursuit of welfare so blatantly uncertain and subject to competition? Why insert competitive antagonism so squarely into the heart of the activity of pursuing one's own happiness? Of note, the *uncertainty* and *risk* civil society puts at the heart of the very right it is supposed to protect cuts both ways: civil society does not merely put risk and uncertainty at the heart of the pursuit of welfare. Because civil society is charged with protecting the right to welfare of each, market uncertainty thereby also puts risk and uncertainty at the heart of its own *legitimacy* as an institution – and indeed, of the *unity* (and ethical substantiality) of the social order as a whole. On our reading, the grave mutual risk and uncertainty individuals and social unity both face in civil society are far from an oversight on Hegel's part. To see why, we must come to grips with what may be the most underappreciated feature of Hegel's approach to crises of legitimacy with civil society.

Hegel's account does not seek to address the threat of crises of legitimacy by eliminating the factors that give rise to them in the first place: at the end of the day, tensions between the particularity of individuals and the social order's unity. In Hegel's words, civil society is charged with allowing the social order as a whole to exhibit

the truly infinite force [*Kraft*] which resides solely in that unity which allows the opposition within reason to *develop to its full strength*, and has overcome it so as to preserve itself within [the

opposition] and integrate/hold together [*zusammenhält*] [the opposition] within itself.

(EPR: §185A)

That is to say, first, that an essential feature of Hegel's approach is to task civil society with somehow *maximising* the salience and pressure exerted by the opposition between the particularity of individual and social unity. His account does so in two critical ways.

On the one hand, recognising the freedom and authority of each individual over what counts as her own welfare maximises the pressure that comes from incompatibilities in different individuals' perspectives on their own welfare. Social orders could attempt to *silence*, hide, or bury this problem by imposing harmonious, non-jointly incompatible conceptions of a satisfying life on its members. In other words, social orders could attempt to reject *pluralism* about welfare: the view that the different individuals might each have a legitimate claim to jointly incompatible conceptions of their own welfare. By Hegel's lights, this would amount to jointly mutilating the freedom of the social order in self-organising its own unity and mutilating the freedom of individuals.

On the other hand, social orders that do recognise the authority of individuals over their own welfare could attempt to circumvent pressure coming from incompatibilities in their perspectives by placing the burden of achieving welfare on individuals. Hegel's account instead treats welfare – and not merely its pursuit – as a right that the social order must protect. Treating achieving a satisfying life as the sole responsibility of individuals would deny the interdependence of the welfare and happiness of individuals and the legitimacy of the social order.

Hegel appears to have saddled his social order with an impossible task: protecting the welfare of each, when even protecting the welfare of a single individual cannot be done without fail, and under *pluralism* about the welfare of different individuals, where different individuals can have conceptions of their respective welfare that cannot be jointly realised. The fragility of welfare even for a single individual would remain even without recognising their perspectives as the arbiter of their own welfare. For any living being, quality of life is *irreducibly fragile*, risky, and uncertain. But there is even less hiding from that fragility and uncertainty for the project of protecting the welfare of each under pluralism about welfare.

On our reading, it would be more accurate to say that Hegel sees *all social orders* as saddled with an impossible problem: protecting the welfare of each when that undeniably cannot be done without fail; and rejecting pluralism about welfare only serves to do further harm to both individuals and the social fabric.

The first key part of civil society's innovation on this point is to “develop to its full strength” the challenge of protecting the right of individuals to their particularity and the welfare of each by neither silencing

any aspect of the problem of the welfare of each, nor abdicating the collective responsibility to protect the welfare of each.

The second part of the innovation hinted at in §185A is the type of solution it looks for in the first place: where having allowed the opposition (problems) to “develop its full strength”, it would somehow “overcome” it in a way that both “preserves” the social order within the opposition and “integrates” the opposition within the social order. If the social order can neither abdicate the responsibility to protect the welfare of each, nor fully and reliably protect it, Hegel sees the form a just solution would have to take as *reconciling, rather than eliminative*. Where, instead of attempting to eliminate the occurrence of conflict and antagonisms from the project of protecting the pluralistic welfare of each, the solution needs to respond to antagonisms in a way that heals the damage they might do to both individuals and the social fabric.³⁷

The point is most easily appreciated by considering the mechanism through which civil society is supposed to fulfill its core function: *Bildung*, the formation, and indeed transformation of the perspective of participants in civil society, as an automatic, decentralised product of their normal participation in civil society.³⁸ There are multiple aspects to the *Bildung* brought about by civil society. The more widely appreciated include:³⁹ (i) the “self-discipline” and professional skills acquired through work;⁴⁰ (ii) the transformation of the individual’s perspective, gradually learning to “incorporate” the perspectives of others “as I come into contact with them” through economic activities;⁴¹ and (iii) the transformation of our customs and culture such as to become both increasingly diverse and pluralistic, but against the homogeneous background of our equality as human beings and persons.⁴²

There is a further, less commonly appreciated aspect of the *Bildung* of civil society that directly turns on the antagonistic surface structure of competition over market opportunities. Hegel maintains that a crucial part of civil society’s full development of the right of individuals to their particularity, to what makes them different from each other, requires allowing *inequalities* in resources and skills between individuals.⁴³ In responding to those who “oppose this right with a demand for equality”, Hegel claims that the objection misses the importance of the right for the essential, “rational” function of civil society.⁴⁴ From PR, §187, we know that function to operate through *Bildung*. Why would protecting the particularity of individuals, even where that means protecting inequalities in resources and skills, be a vital part of civil society’s *Bildung*?

A helpful starting point is Thimo Heisenberg’s (2018) proposal that the chaos, inequalities, and uncertainty that run through civil society contribute to teach each member of civil society “the prudential value of living in a well-organised society”.⁴⁵ The point operates against the background understanding of market participants as each pursuing their self-interest. This is what we have been describing as the antagonistic

surface structure of market participation. Further, civil society gives its participants a lived experience of the dependence of success or failure in pursuing their self-interest – including poverty – on all manners of sheer luck, contingency, and arbitrariness.⁴⁶

Civil society provides a lived experience of the risk, uncertainty, and danger of the antagonistic pursuit of self-interest: an experience of the “the remnants of the state of nature”.⁴⁷ The prudential lesson would come in with civil society supplementing that experience with some measure of economic protection, some measure of protection of their right to welfare. If those protections are adequate, individuals learn that their self-interest is best served by institutions that protect the common good and the welfare of each, rather than by the unchecked antagonisms of self-interest.

On our view, this argument for the formative power of a well-dosed balance of economic insecurity and economic protection gets us squarely in the territory that Adorno finds so revealing of the situation of modern welfare states. As we will see, Adorno argues that in practice, modern welfare states leverage this balancing act in a way that nudges most individuals into accepting social conditions that routinely trample the promise of their fair share of life satisfaction; in short, that the kind of *Bildung* civil society describes proves to function as a *Bannkreis*.

The question of whether these four forms of *Bildung* capture Hegel’s main approach to containing the oppositions of civil society is delicate. We conclude this section with a few open remarks on the issue. First, Hegel repeatedly claims that civil society on its own cannot bring about and sustain a just and legitimate form of social unity. A comprehensive investigation of this question would have to consider the contribution of the other core institutions of Hegel’s rational social order – the family and the state.

As far as understanding civil society’s isolated contribution to mending the wounds it inflicts by forcing its members through the antagonisms of self-interest, a crucial question is how far the institution goes in protecting the right to welfare, and why. We argued that protecting the right to welfare is inevitably a fallible, uncertain task for any social order. If the institution merely strives to avoid failing so badly as to jeopardise social unity, a serious case can be made that it is illegitimate. In effect, it would merely be using protection against economic harm as a tool for engineering social stability – and, for instance, for preventing the emergence of a rabble. We take the resources examined in the present section to suggest that there may be room within the parameters of Hegel’s account for a much more emphatic protection of the right of welfare. In particular, there may be room to argue that the social order *must protect welfare as well as can be* given the problem at hand: providing a way of navigating the oppositions, conflicts, and pitfalls that inevitably come with the territory of the welfare of each that is mutually reconciling for all. On that

kind of approach, the social order would have the burden of ceaselessly proving that its protection of the welfare of each genuinely warrants trust from each, rather than warranting disenfranchisement.⁴⁸

III

Tracing Bannkreis: From Adorno's Sociology to His Philosophy of History and Nature

1. Approaching Adorno's Sociology

Much of Adorno's critical theory of society can be read as a materialistic transformation of Hegel's theory of civil society. An important emphasis of Adorno's lectures on sociology is to highlight the ways in which society can *forgo* addressing the kind of legitimation crises that Hegel articulates as arising out of society's basic antagonism. How does Adorno think of the way modern welfare societies silence crises of legitimacy? How does Adorno's conception of *Bannkreis* aim to illuminate the root structure of how all antagonistic societies silence crises of legitimacy?

Methodologically, the materialist transformation of Hegelian totality demands that the antagonistic society is studied through a *plurality of models*. These models provide partial explanations and perspectival descriptions of the self-maintaining and antagonistic social whole. They are attempts at describing the universal, as it were, from below, in its particular mediations without losing sight of what is non-identical to it and thereby disclosing it. Each of them seeks to characterise the vicious circle of society by describing some of its phases and, from there, illustrate how the whole "maintains itself . . . in and through its antagonisms" without being "able to resolve them". As it were, they *trace Bannkreis*: They follow through some mode in which the social totality is mediated through a certain class of social facts.

For grasping Adorno's transformation of Hegel's idea of society as an organic totality that maintains itself in and through its antagonisms, on our view, three of these models prove to be particularly helpful: Adorno calls them "tendency," "concretism," and "identification with the aggressor". We hope that taking these models as examples also helps see how the idea of *Bannkreis* can be put to productive use in critical social theorising.

2. Tendency

On a macro-sociological level, Adorno models the social totality as "tendency".⁴⁹ "Tendencies" are expressed as sets of propositions, based on social facts, about the *direction* in which society is evolving. In the model of tendency, Adorno thus tries to contain the speculative mediations between what is socially given and the concept of society. The speculative

aspect of the judgement of tendency is that it is about the state of affairs in society *and* the qualitatively different outcome of that state yet to occur. Although the assertion of a tendency necessarily goes beyond a mere assembling of social facts, it proceeds from the analysis of those facts:

recognising a tendency means recognising, within the theoretical analysis of a given state, that element which qualitatively differs from this state itself, . . . which means that it is not simply an extension of how the current state presents itself.

(Adorno 2019: 24)

The speculative aspect of stating a tendency involves the recognition of a non-identical element: the movement of the process of social reproduction in a direction, which is different from its current structure. Adorno gives the example of the socially effective principle of free and equal exchange: what is it supposed to lead to and where does it, based on a rigorous analysis of social facts, *really* lead to?⁵⁰ The model of tendency discloses how the antagonistic maintenance of a social environment will modify that environment.

Adorno claims that tendencies only appear in *totalities*. The model only applies to essentially *dynamic* social wholes. It describes social orders “whose only invariance is [their] own variability”,⁵¹ that is, organic totalities. This means that tendencies exist if and only if social life has organised itself as a totality. It also means that Adorno’s social theory does recognise social entities, which do *not* present totalities. Adorno mentions “more or less connected social groups” or “markets that are only loosely connected” as examples of social assemblages, of which the model of tendency can make no sense.⁵² However, the dynamics of a social totality, Adorno argues, must be expressed as a tendency.⁵³ As such a totality, *Bannkreis* predominantly describes social wholes beyond those of social groups in the sense of units of collective intentional action.

What is the role of “tendency” in tracing *Bannkreis*? Using metaphorical philosophical language, *Bannkreis* can be described as a vicious circle of an overpowering societal second nature continuing into the individual first and second nature so as to maintain its form through antagonisms.⁵⁴ Judgements of tendency give an account of the *dynamic of societal second nature*: “one could almost define tendency as the dynamic laws of a totality”.⁵⁵ It provides social theorists with a tool for making speculative judgements about the dynamics of a *social environment*, which exerts an adaptive pressure on individuals by means of customs, institutions, and functional connections.

As a model for theoretical knowledge about social dynamics, Adorno presents “tendency” as a critical alternative to modeling social theory and its object, society, as “system”.

Like Hegel, Adorno traces the idea of a system of society back to classical political economy. Smith and Ricardo authored uniform theories starting from systematic umbrella terms, which they would use to explain the whole.⁵⁶ But also in his sociological lectures, Adorno singles out Hegel's category of organic totality as the most perfected expression of the system of society: Hegel's system claims it

could reconcile the concept of dynamics, which comes from society itself . . . with the invariance of the concepts of its self-identical nature by claiming . . . that the essence of social dynamics is itself its invariant element, its ontology. That is, if you like, the point . . . of Hegel's entire construction.

(Adorno 2019: 26)

However, important for understanding Adorno's move from Hegelian organic totality to a materialistic tracing of *Bannkreis* through the model of tendency, is his reading of Marx: for Marx, the system of a capitalist society appears as *part* of a statement of tendency. When Adorno introduces the model to his students, he immediately refers to Marx's doctrine of the tendentially falling rate of profit.⁵⁷ The decisive difference between classical political economy and the *critique* of political economy, he argues, lies in the way in which the system of the former is sublated in the latter's statement of tendency:

the positive liberal theories and the negative ones such as those of Marx and Engels, the critical theories, were in agreement; that is, Marx's theory is entirely traditional in viewing society as a system, a self-enclosed deductive system, only – and this 'only' is meant with great irony – with the twist that it asks, 'Now look at this system, what happens to it because of its absolute consistency?'

(Adorno 2019: 26)

In Marx's presentation of the system of society as tendency, the liberal principle of free and equal exchange is drawn to its immanent consequence through an analysis of its social facts. In that judgement, the social totality, "in realising itself, becomes its own negative", that is, the judgement discloses that "it is not the internally harmonious, congruent and thus life-guaranteeing being" it claims.⁵⁸

However, Adorno does not simply take over Marx's concept of tendency. Rather, like with Hegel's category of organic totality, his intention is to radicalise it. Since Marx's times, he argues, social antagonisms have expanded to such an extent that "they can no longer be deduced in the same form from a uniform concept of society, as is attempted in Marx's theory"; this intensification of social antagonisms means that "the very

idea of a theory of society, in the sense of a systematic unity, has become extremely problematic".⁵⁹ The model of tendency alone is not enough anymore in the radically antagonistic society. What is needed for grasping this broken object is a more radical sublation of the idea of system: the operation with a *plurality* of models to trace the vicious circle of a society maintaining itself in its disruption.

As one of those models, "tendency" presents the attempt to grasp the dynamic social environment as a movement towards what it is not. It allows to speak of a system of society as "not fully realised".⁶⁰ Therefore, the judgement of tendency is, as it were, always already *critical*: it presents society as "not the system that, according to its own concept, it should be."⁶¹

3. Concretism

"Concretism" is a concept that Adorno borrows from psychology and sociologises into a model for tracing another phase of *Bannkreis*. Adorno notes "concretism" in psychology refers to the incapacity for abstraction, to a psychopathology of compulsively clinging to the very next task ahead, to the "concrete", as it were. By analogy, Adorno's sociological model of concretism refers to the socially caused inability of individuals "to resist their immediate interests",⁶² which averts them from socially transformative action. As Adorno metaphorically puts it, concretism describes the everyday social phenomenon

that the people who are given the burden, and consequently walk bent over with their heads bowed, that it has always been very hard for them to hold those heads up high . . . and see more than their immediate interests.

(Adorno 2019: 41)

Concretism is the social pathology, in which the consciousness of individuals is tied so firmly to the immediately given conditions of action that any critical reflection on them and following action which would seek to reshape them becomes nearly unimaginable. More specifically, concretism operates in the welfare state by binding the consciousness of individuals to commodities that occupy their attention to an overwhelming extent. And that serves to maintain the commodified experience of social life:

This overwhelming quantity of consumer goods, incidentally, like the advertising apparatus, points back to objective structural problems in society . . . namely the whole question of overinvestment and overproduction, as well as the necessity for the system, in order to

survive, to exert an additional pressure in every conceivable way in order to shackle people to these very consumer goods.

(Adorno 2019: 42)

Concretism traces a specific phase of *Bannkreis*: the way in which the antagonistic totality operates by shaping the conditions of individual action so as to dispose individuals to react affirmatively to the functional requirements resulting from given social antagonisms. If we continue to articulate *Bannkreis* as a vicious circle of social second nature continuing into the individual second and first nature by means of antagonisms, then concretism describes social second nature molding individual second nature. In other words, it illustrates, from the perspective of the actors, how the overpowering *social environment* maintains itself by putting a restricting *adaptive pressure* on *individual habituation* to the point of suffocating the capacity of individuals to critically react to it.

Adorno underlines that the cause of concretism is the basic antagonism of *Bannkreis*, namely that between social power and social powerlessness:⁶³

I would like to think that the true origin (*Grund*) of this phenomenon of concretism lies much deeper. . . . [B]ecause of the incredible disproportion between all individuals, every individual, wherever they might be, and the concentrated power of society, the notion of resisting this agglomerated power seems illusory.

(Adorno 2019: 43)

Concretism provides a sociological description and partial explanation of what Adorno often calls our “inability to have (*machen*) genuine experiences”:⁶⁴ “[T]his inability . . . and the fixation on the mere objects of immediate exchange, which are affectively charged, idolised and fetishized by people, are essentially the same thing”.⁶⁵

The inability to really have experiences hollows out the kind of “experiments in living”,⁶⁶ which would be essential for individuals in participating and maintaining a democratic welfare society open to critical challenges from within. It makes it more difficult and hence unlikely that legitimization crises will be critically addressed. However, Adorno does *not* claim that the phenomenon of concretism makes critique, socially transformative practice, impossible. Instead, its way of disposing individuals to become resistant to genuine experiences makes critique and social transformation seem *illusory*.

For such socially transformative practice to get off the ground, individuals need some degree of theoretical consciousness, that is, the ability to make speculative judgements that point beyond the given circumstances, beyond “the concrete”. Rather than eliminating such consciousness, concretism shapes the conditions of action so that the object of such critical consciousness seems cognitively unattainable: “[t]he phenomenon of

concretism . . . does not prevent the objective possibility of theory formation, the incredibly complex and ramified context makes it seem opaque to the naïve person”.⁶⁷

Thus, this model highlights a way in which the antagonisms of civil society not so much enable *Bildung* as Hegel anticipated, but rather work to restrain it. Concretism operates as a kind of *counter-education*.⁶⁸ In his sociological lectures and talks, Adorno often emphasises that in contemporary society, “things are genuinely no longer so terribly complicated”.⁶⁹ Without concretism, even the most powerless and uneducated member of society could today read the face of *Bannkreis*:

[T]he reason (*Vernunft*) of every single individual would suffice to perform the rather simple thought operations for which I have developed for you some models. That people still do not accomplish this . . . does not depend on their inability to think but on the fact that they forgo thought, because the increasing insight into those contradictions . . . makes their life difficult and inflicts on them an additional suffering.

(Adorno 1957: 214 – translation A.S.)

Concretism as *counter-education* makes the individual, who in principle is already educated enough to properly grasp the relations of domination in society to degenerate from that given level of critical consciousness to functioning as a mere organ of the suffocating environment. And it does so by shaping the conditions of everyday action, to make any socially transformative action seem illusory because of the social totality’s ostensibly opaque character.

The acceptance of the illusion of the opacity of the social whole is so hard to resist, because it alleviates the individuals’ pain of living the antagonisms of the administered world. Adorno calls this the “affective power” of *Bannkreis*.⁷⁰ Adaptive pressure from the social environment affects the individuals with a “feeling of powerlessness” (*Gefühl der Ohnmacht*), the feeling of finding oneself confronted with overwhelming social powers, vis-à-vis which one’s own decisions go poof.⁷¹ Adorno underlines that this affective power awakens the feeling of powerlessness not only in those relatively disadvantaged in society but in *every individual*. Concretism affects the entire social fabric.

That all individuals, across their varying functions in social reproduction, are affected by the immense adaptive pressure of the social environment in roughly the same way makes an emancipatory potential explicit. Concretism is namely a source of *solidarity*: as a

phenomenon that has spread throughout society as a whole . . . this restriction to the immediate, and the decision to clench one’s teeth

and avoid looking beyond what is closest at all costs, . . . is where we find something resembling solidarity in society as a whole.

(Adorno 2019: 41)

In the model of concretism, there is also a non-identical moment to the antagonistic social totality, namely that of a solidarity of all individuals damaged by the overwhelming power of an unsocial society. The model then shifts the attention of its addressees from the next particular thing (“the concrete”) to the objective possibility of a universal solidarity against the universality of the totality.

4. *Identification With the Aggressor*

According to Adorno, part of the antagonistic nature of society’s *Bannkreis* is that it conditions its members by systematically producing needs that are likewise systematically frustrated; the frustration, then, produces drive-conflicts, which, in turn, produce an agency that eventually maintains the whole.⁷² This conditioning of *individuals* works through a psychic mechanism of identification. When describing this destructive dynamic, Adorno often alludes to Anna Freud’s concept of an *identification with the aggressor*, out of which he makes the model for tracing a further phase of *Bannkreis*.

“Identification with the aggressor” (IWA) refers to a specific defense mechanism, namely one by which children overcome fear through imitation.⁷³ However, Adorno argues that the aggressor, with whom a victim comes to identify, does not need to be understood as a person, but might well be the social environment whose violent adaptive pressure the individual internalises.⁷⁴

With this modification of the idea of IWA, Adorno wishes to turn our attention to the fact that

the adaptation required of people today apparently demands so much from them that they cannot anymore satisfy those requirements. The consequence is a certain overidentification with the state of the world, a degeneration (*Absterben*) of their critical capacity, . . . , they do what in psychoanalysis once was called ‘identification with the aggressor,’ that is, instead of trying to change what blindly befalls them, they make themselves its advocates, and this is so because they do not experience the consciousness of possible change anymore, because the perspective in them, that there could be change at all, has already died.

(Adorno 1957: 217 – translation A.S.)

The model explains how the basic antagonism between social power and social powerlessness maintains itself through the individual psyche by

means of a mechanism of identification.⁷⁵ To stay with the picture of *Bannkreis* as a vicious circle of second and first nature, IWA, as one of its phases, works to bring forth a painful identification of individual first nature with social second nature. IWA presents the continuation of the antagonistic social second nature into the first nature of the individuals, because it molds their drives and impulses, makes them “voluntarily affirm and even seek the forms of repression that are forced on them from without”.⁷⁶ The social environment besets the innermost facets of the psychic economy of the individual by making it desire its own helplessness:

The superego, the locus of conscience, not merely represents what is socially tabooed as being intrinsically evil but also irrationally combines the ancient dread of physical annihilation with the much later fear of being expelled from the social community which has come to encircle us in the place of nature. . . . The instinctual energy of the *homo oeconomicus* who lords it over the *homo psychologicus* is the compulsive love for what was once hated.

(Adorno 1955a: 71)

Like concretism, IWA provides a partial description of the antagonistic social totality from the perspective of individuals under the pressure to adapt to an excessively powerful social environment. But this description is importantly different from the one provided by the former. It namely proceeds from the effects of *Bannkreis* not on the second nature of the individuals, the social pressures on their habituation, but from those on their first nature, their archaic psychic structure. It also describes a less general pathology, as – unlike in concretism – the individuals suffering from it have already completely lost all hope to react to social reproduction in a transformative way; whereas Adorno maintains that we *all* are affected by concretism, he never claims that everyone is subject to IWA. For the maintenance of *Bannkreis*, it is enough that *many* of us (“countless people”⁷⁷) are subject to IWA.

In this identification with society, the adaptive pressure of concretism has already become insufferable for the individual psyche. Therefore, it is *repressed*. Again, Adorno alludes to the affective power of the antagonistic social environment:

as soon as the experience [of powerlessness] is turned into the ‘feeling of powerlessness’ (*Gefühl der Ohnmacht*) the specifically psychological element has entered in, the fact that individuals, precisely, *cannot* experience or confront their powerlessness. . . . This repression of their powerlessness points not merely to the disproportion between the individual and his powers within the whole but still more to injured narcissism and the fear of realising that they themselves go to make up the false forces of domination before which they have every

reason to cringe. They have to convert the experience of helplessness into a ‘feeling’ and let it settle psychologically in order not to think beyond it.

(Adorno 1955b: 89 – translation modified)

IWA results from the repression of the feeling of powerlessness affected by concretism: it completes *Bannkreis* as counter-education.⁷⁸ The individual has lost her capacity to have genuine experiences. The adaptation to society is knitted so tightly that no experiments in living will be undertaken.

But again, the model also points to something non-identical in the antagonistic totality. It discloses individual spontaneity as the boundary of socialisation in the subject.⁷⁹ Social reproduction relies on it as its medium; even IWA must be enacted by the individual. In a certain way, then, Adorno, in the darkest hour of his sociological modeling, returns to a version of the basic principle of Hegel’s ontology of social order: its “reality” is “self-conscious individuals”. The individual opposes *Bannkreis* with the same type of force through which it established itself, *Bildung*: a circle of social environment, habituation, and socialisation. It is a question of *Bildung*, which would strengthen the ego against the power of the social environment, whether that circle will remain the vicious one of counter-education or the liberating one of genuine experience where the individuals use their spontaneity to reshape (*gestalten*) their social environment.⁸⁰

5. *Bannkreis*, World History, Natural History

So far, the elements of Adorno’s account of *Bannkreis* we have considered leave open the question of the problem’s historical *scope*: is *Bannkreis* a problem that specifically belongs to *welfare states*, or perhaps *modern social orders* more broadly? Is it perhaps a problem we should associate with *capitalism*? With the *enlightenment*? With *rationality*? Adorno’s answer to these questions is an emphatic *no*.

In addressing questions about the historical scope of the *Bannkreis* problem, Adorno crucially shifts from emphasising the tools of sociology, to emphasising the tools of the philosophy of history. The two interlocking layers of the account are announced by the title of *Negative Dialectics*’ second “model” chapter: “World-Spirit and Natural History. Excursus on Hegel” (*Weltgeist und Naturgeschichte. Exkurs zu Hegel*). The first revisits the kind of philosophical reconstruction of world history Hegel is notorious for: arguing that *Bannkreis* answers the question that Hegel’s account of *Weltgeist* was meant to answer; while the second frames the world-historical pattern of *Bannkreis* as belonging to the natural history of animal behaviour.

The first layer presents *Bannkreis* as the answer to the question of Hegel's account of *Weltgeist*. The introductions to Hegel's lectures on the *Philosophy of World History* infamously propose that world history has a hidden unifying function: the attempt to bring about social conditions that fully realise both individual and collective freedom,⁸¹ and thereby, social conditions that fully realise the "ultimate end of mankind [*Menschheit*]"⁸² What Hegel calls "world spirit" (*Weltgeist*) is the aspect of human sociality (arguably, of *Sittlichkeit*) that makes this hidden function operative throughout human history. Crucially, Hegel argues that the mechanisms that make this hidden function operative throughout human history involve the subjectivity of individuals – the full motley crew of subjective motivations that go from their self-conceptions to their passions, and even their self-interest.⁸³ Whether individuals realise it or not, even the most idiosyncratic aspects of their subjectivity end up, over the course of history, implicitly serving the end of progress towards realising the ultimate end of mankind.

Adorno's excursus on Hegel involves a well-known rejection of any description of universal history as progressively realising our collective aspirations. Rather, the one aspect of history that is appropriately understood with the universalising tools of "*Weltgeschichte*" and "*Universalgeschichte*" is the *pervasiveness* of social conditions that, to paraphrase Hegel, "trample the roots of humanity":

The unity of world history . . . is the unity of what rolls over, of horror, in an immediate way antagonism.

(GS 6: 335 – translation modified.)

If there is any unifying function of world history, Adorno argues, it would have to be one that helps make sense of *why unsocial society* in all its forms *appears to be the overwhelming rule*, rather than the exception.

What is rarely appreciated is his attempt to develop a general framework for investigating the place of the subjectivity of individuals in sustaining the pervasiveness of unsocial society, of social conditions that violate rather than fulfill the promises of our humanity. Adorno proposes that we understand the subjective roots of the pervasiveness of such conditions as *Bann*:

Now as before, human beings, individual subjects, stand under a *Bann*. It is the subjective form of the world-spirit, whose primacy over the externalized life-process is reinforced internally. What they can do nothing about, and which negates them, is what they themselves become.

(GS6: 337 – translation modified)

Bann names the subjective deformations individuals go through under all social conditions where they jointly experience (i) systemic antagonisms that violate human beings and (ii) their own powerlessness in correcting these violations. The proposal is not that there is a one size, consistent, or easily recognisable subjective impact to the joint experience of such systemic antagonisms and of such powerlessness. Rather, the proposal is that among the complex formative effects of such experiences, there tends to be an aspect of subjective *disenfranchisement*: to some extent, most such experiences tend to reinforce subjective dispositions and habits that jointly undermine an individual's capacity to demand and strive for genuine correctives to all violations of human beings.

The second level of Adorno's answer to the scope question characterises *Bann* as an extension, or repetition of patterns that occur throughout the animal world. *Bannkreis* presents a pattern of asymmetric circularity between individuals and their environment. The environment's hostility to the interests of individuals shapes them into reinforcing and perpetuating that very hostility. This circle-like movement was already expressed in Adorno's early idea that "[s]econd nature is, in truth, first nature".⁸⁴ The mature account of *Negative Dialectics* likewise traces the problem of *Bannkreis* back to animal behaviour:

Brainwashing and similar techniques practice from without an immanent anthropological tendency, which indeed for its part is motivated from without. The natural-historical norm of adaptation . . . is . . . the schemata of world-spirit as *Bann*.

(GS 6: 342 – translation modified)

Adaptation (*Anpassung*) is a concept from evolutionary biology. It is the idea that both the traits and behaviours that tend to spread in a population are those that maximise a group's (or any unit of selection's) likelihood of survival and reproduction. Adorno's point is that at its core, biological adaptation is radically indifferent to the happiness of individual organisms: no matter how we look at it, adaptation never primarily selects for the satisfaction of the particular interests of individuals. As such, adaptation functionally brainwashes animal organisms into traits and behaviours that fail to genuinely prioritise their own happiness, the satisfaction of their own particular interests. Antagonistic totalities imitate organic nature by doing the same thing to human subjectivity, reinforcing subjective dispositions that perpetually fail to genuinely prioritise even their bearers' own happiness.

Notice, Adorno calls the subjective deformations that disenfranchise individuals from demanding and realising conditions that fulfill rather than trample their interests a magic spell (*Bann*), and calls the trap of that disenfranchisement a magic vicious circle (*Bannkreis*). The kind of joint

experience of systemic antagonism and powerlessness Adorno draws our attention to is overwhelmingly and painfully real. In all experiences through which individuals become conscious of systemic antagonisms, there is a fragment of socially transformative power: at the bare minimum, the fragile power to identify, to name a violation, and to demand its abolition.⁸⁵ “Hurt says: pass away”.⁸⁶ The problem-space the account attempts to circumscribe is that of the *ideological* surplus through which such experiences silence the fragments of socially transformative powers they also truly contain:

Bann and ideology are the same. What is fatal about the latter is that it dates back to biology.

(GS6, 342 – translation modified)

It may appear simple to oppose the power of socially reinforced illusions when the reinforcement mechanisms are in any way controlled by people: it might appear like a matter of changing that control. On the one hand, the account proposes that the problem of the factors that reinforce subjective disenfranchisement about social change far outstrips our control: extending into the full range of involuntary mechanisms that we inherit from our ancestors. On the other hand, the account proposes that the stakes of the operation and effects of such disenfranchisement could not be graver. *Bann* names the hooks through which our subjective dispositions and habits – including ideology – become instruments of self-perpetuating *antagonistic cycles*: ceaselessly generating cycles of violence, destruction, and fear much too similar to the conditions Hobbes associates with the state of nature. Through the *deformations* of *Bann*, individuals come to function as instruments of breaking the promise of a legitimate social contract.⁸⁷

IV

Bildung and Bannkreis

Hegel’s account of the *Bildung* of civil society operates on the assumption that the social order being examined maximally fulfills the promise of the social contract, namely that it genuinely protects the happiness of each. If instead,

all is not well with [the members of a social order], if their subjective aims are not satisfied, if they do not find that the state as such is the means to their satisfaction, then the footing of the state itself is insecure.

(EPR: §265A)

Where this promise is fulfilled, Hegel maintains, the antagonisms of civil society can provide each with an unusually pluralistic and decentralised path to experiencing the compatibility of their own interests with both the welfare of each and the social fabric.

Adorno raises the question of what power the very formative mechanism Hegel uncovers might prove to have in conditions like those of modern welfare states: which would instead combine (i) deep(er) incompatibility of the interests of each with the *status quo* with (ii) a surface veneer that looks just enough like protection of the happiness of each to mask the visibility of this incompatibility.

Hegel's account also has the resources to reach the conclusion that modern welfare states would thereby break their legitimating promise and subordinate their sovereignty to irrationality. Arguably, Hegel's account has the resources to help understand the anti-emancipatory potential of the experience of market antagonisms under such conditions.

Where Adorno's models sharply break from Hegel is with the question of why social orders keep breaking their legitimating promise. The impetus for this question has much in common with what we see as the impetus for Hegel's mature project: attempting to process the joint lessons of the history of antagonisms on all fronts. But by the time of the late 1960s, the face of that history had shifted:

No universal history leads from savagery to humanity, but one indeed from the slingshot to the H-bomb. It culminates in the total threat of organised humanity against organised human beings.

(GS 6: 314)

Adorno's account of *Bannkreis* argues that one of the most pervasive and indomitable obstacles to social transformation is a counterpart of the *Bildung* mechanism Hegel finds in civil society: the subjective deformations that come with adaptation to any fundamentally antagonistic environment.

The gravity of Adorno's description of history should not be mistaken for hopelessness. The account of *Bannkreis* attempts to articulate the contours of an easily underestimated problem-space: that of the complex range of ways antagonistic societies can render our subjectivities instrumental to antagonistic cycles. "*Bann* and ideology" magically turn into hopeless fatality through the surplus of illusion that suppresses, silences, and diverts from the fragments of socially transformative possibilities we do have. For Adorno, giving those fragments a chance to bloom begins with the opposite of unsociality: "the negation of physical suffering of even the least of its members. . . [and] a solidarity transparent to itself and to every living being".⁸⁸ Ironically, the very reactions that have shaped so

much of the reception of Adorno's works point to one of the most potent countermeasure to *Bannkreis*:

Because too much thinking, an unwavering autonomy, hinders the conformity to the administered world and causes suffering, countless people project this suffering imposed on them by society onto reason as such. The dialectic of enlightenment . . . is, as it were, broken off too early. . . . Convulsively, deliberately, one ignores the fact that the excess of rationality, about which the educated class especially complains . . . is a lack of rationality.

(CM: 137–138)

The illusions of *Bannkreis* practice opposition to social transformation. Rationality that reflectively resists the pressures that would turn it into an instrument of unsociality resists *Bannkreis*. In the face of *Bannkreis* – and all forms of ideology – “critiqu[e]” is “socially transformative praxis”.⁸⁹

“Tendency”, “concretism”, and “IWA” present examples of how Adorno's sociological work attempts to practice critical, rational resistance to *Bannkreis*. They all provide partial explanations and perspectival descriptions of how antagonistic social totalities forgo addressing legitimacy crises and maintain themselves in and through antagonisms they cannot resolve. Yet each model also discloses an objective possibility of another society: “Tendency” shows that even the antagonistic reproduction of society presents a movement towards something qualitatively different; “concretism” points at the potential of a universal solidarity of all of us who are affected with the feeling of powerlessness; “IWA”, finally, reveals individual spontaneity as the boundary of socialisation in the innermost facets of the subject, a capacity that even the antagonistic society relies on for its persistence but which also presents the locus of a resistance against it.

Together, they disclose the dangerous proximity of *Bildung* and *Bannkreis*: they are both circles of social environment, habituation, and socialisation. They come apart where adaptive pressure from the social environment turns individuals into instruments of would-be self-organising totalities. Processes that shape subjectivities into being instruments of social wholes are at their core antagonistic: they trample, suppress, and violate what resists the pressures of the whole. Much like enlightenment turning to myth, *Bildung* that imitates social totalities tends to revert to *Bannkreis*. *Bildung* might get closer to being socially transformative – as through critique – the furthest it gets from turning subjects into “means”,⁹⁰ from subjection to the functional unity of social orders: “[a] liberated mankind would by no means be a totality”.⁹¹

Notes

1. “The opposites do indeed cancel themselves in reference to each other, the result being equal to zero; but there is also present in them their identical reference 3 which is itself indifferent to the opposition; so the two constitute a one” (SL: 372).
2. See e.g. Adorno (1957: 192f, 2019: 65–66).
3. See e.g. Adorno (2019: 81).
4. See e.g. Adorno (2019: 67).
5. Adorno (1957: 218f, 2019: 67).
6. Adorno (1993: 20).
7. Namely Adorno (2011: 12–13).
8. Namely Adorno et al. (1976).
9. See e.g. Adorno (1969: 4–5).
10. Adorno (1957: 189–190).
11. On Adorno’s debate with harmonistic conceptions of the reproduction of social wholes, see Särkelä (2020).
12. Adorno (1993: 28) – translation modified.
13. PS: §69, 43.
14. William Bristow’s account (2007) of the *Phenomenology*’s engagement with the Kantian project of critique helpfully illuminates that thread. See also Blili-Hamelin (2019), Chapter 3.
15. Honneth (1995: 67).
16. ERP: §182.
17. We are deliberately contradicting Hegel’s sexism, because Hegel’s sexism leaves no room for women to be full members of civil society.
18. Namely EPR: §241.
19. Namely EPR: §242. See Wood (1990: 250–253) for an overview of the different facets of Hegel’s diagnosis of the subjective ravages of poverty.
20. Andreja Novakovic (2017: 137ff.) helpfully describes how trust in one’s capacity to satisfy one’s needs through market participation is essential to civil society’s function as an institution. We mean to say that acute poverty undermines any such trust for the economically disenfranchised.
21. Namely EPR: §244.
22. SL: 672.
23. Of note, like his account of rational activities more generally, Hegel conceives of what plays the unifying function as a *concept* (*Begriff*). For instance: “The worst state, one whose reality least corresponds to the concept, in so far as it still has concrete existence, is yet idea; the individuals still obey the power of a concept” (SL: 673). For clarity, the approach developed here is broadly sympathetic to the “conceptual realist” family of interpretations of the core of Hegel’s metaphysics: where immanent, objectively existing, mind-independent concepts explain the ontological structure of (at least some) things and (at least some of) the world. This gloss borrows from Kreines (2015) and Knappik (2016; Forthcoming). Influential early defenses of this kind of interpretation include: Stern (1990), deVries (1988, 1991), and Westphal (1989). Blili-Hamelin (2019: ch. 4) argues that there is a pressing need for those sympathetic to this family of interpretation to investigate the distinctive approach of the *Realphilosophie* to metaphysical questions. The latter proposes that Hegel conducts an empirically informed investigation of the ontological structure of the many specific domains of reality. The task is mapping the complex, multifaceted structure of their hospitality to rational pursuits and to rational beings.
24. See Särkelä (2018: parts II and III).

25. SL: 672.
26. Hegel infamously maintains that a feature of fully legitimate social order is that somehow – and unlike illegitimate social orders – fully legitimate (and “rational”) social orders do not warrant and necessitate critique by their own members. For instance, “[o]nly in ages when the actual world is a hollow, spiritless, and unsettled existence may the individual be permitted to flee from actuality and retreat into his inner life” (EPR: §138A).
27. This is what Arto Laitinen (2015) calls a “third-order disorder”.
28. Arguably, the question of whether genuine, painful antagonisms over legitimacy get eliminated in a “fully rational social order” needs to be understood as a question about the irreducible finitude of the sphere of objective spirit in general, and of *Sittlichkeit* in particular. In Hegel’s words, “Objective spirit [i.e. the subject matter of right] is the absolute idea, but it is only so in itself, since it is thus *on the terrain of finitude, its actual rationality retains in it the aspect of external appearance*” (PM: §483, 217 – tr. modified). The *Science of Logic* strongly emphasises the irreducible element of “untruth” and “contradictions” in everything finite and worldly. (Namely especially SL: 672; also 201, 124, passim; or EL: §24Z, 2.) On the finitude of the rational state: see e.g. EPR: §258A, §262, §340. Civil society is repeatedly described as characterised by finitude: EPR: §189, §187A, passim. There is a difficult general question about the relation between the project of the *Realphilosophie* and this strand of the *Science of Logic*’s account of the limitations of finitude. Bowman (2013) argues that the *Science of Logic* commits Hegel to a radical form of scepticism about the finite. Though Bowman’s book mostly engages with the implications of that scepticism for knowledge of natural phenomena, the argument would have far-reaching implications for subjective and objective spirit as well. Blili-Hamelin (2019) argues that even in the case of the *Philosophy of Nature*, the project should not be understood as presupposing any blanket form of scepticism. Rather, the project needs to be understood as an empirically informed investigation of the rich and complex structure of the epistemic, ontological, and normative limitations that characterise the different domains of worldly, finite reality. Where a generalised form of scepticism about the finite would presuppose a *general tension* between our rational ambitions (e.g. knowledge) and the finite, Hegel’s *Realphilosophie* maps the rich variations across the many *specific* areas where such tensions arise. Moreover, whereas global scepticism would involve a general incompatibility between the finite and our (many) rational ambitions, the *Realphilosophie* examines how these ambitions can be reconciled with even the most formidable of such tensions. For instance, in cases where the structure of specific subject matters comes closest to warranting *local* scepticism about knowledge (e.g. the classification of biological species (PN: §368Z) or “the science of jurisprudence” (EL: §16A)), Hegel instead seems to favour *local* fallibilism: knowledge of the phenomena will admit of no complete certainty and will always leave some room for reasonable disagreement. But it is nonetheless a legitimate, non-futile pursuit, and a serious distinction can be drawn between genuine but fallible rational success and failure.
29. We specifically have in mind the dynamics of the community of conscience that conclude Chapter 6 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and which Hegel later describes as capturing the subjective side of absolute spirit. For a more comprehensive look at the relation between the solutions and shortcomings of the community of conscience, and the problem and success condition of the *Philosophy of Right*’s institution of civil society, see Blili-Hamelin (2019), Chapter 5. In particular, the latter argues that the way the community of

conscience fosters mutually reconciling responses to antagonisms presupposes an extreme level of homogeneity in shared commitments. On that interpretation, civil society's contribution to the rational social order involves an attempt at a radically pluralistic alternative to the community of conscience's approach to reconciliation. For an attempt at developing a contemporary version of the model of recognition achieved by the community of conscience that avoids a strong commitment to homogeneity, see Särkelä (2013).

30. We have in mind claims such as "the wounds of spirit [to] heal and leave no scars behind" (PhS: §669). But also "It is thinking that causes the wound and heals it, too" (EL: §24, A3). Adorno revisits this theme by claiming that "cognition is a *τρώσας ἰάσεται*", a wounder that heals. (GS6, 63) The trope comes from the Greek myth of the wound Telephus took from Achilles's spear. The only thing that could heal the wound inflicted by the mythical weapon proved to be the weapon itself. For a helpful comparative investigation of that aspect of Hegel's and Adorno's views, see Macdonald (2000).
31. EPR: §154.
32. Adorno (1993: 28) – translation amended.
33. For insightful accounts of the shortcomings of Hegel's resources in addressing the problem of poverty that argue that these shortcomings undermine Hegel's claim that the social order his account examines is fully "rational" and just: see Wood (1990), Neuhouser (2000), Ruda (2011), Novakovic (2017). For helpful attempts at examining the non-obvious resources Hegel might have in mitigating the risk of the emergence of a rabble, see Anderson (2001), Jackson (2014). Whitt (2013) argues that poverty on a mass scale is necessary for the social order's actualisation of freedom.
34. Namely EPR: §230.
35. The right to welfare comes hand in hand with the kind of freedom the *Philosophy of Right* associates with morality: with the authority of the first-person singular point of view of individuals as acting, living subjects. In the context of civil society, Hegel adds considerations about each member of civil society's status as a concrete person. On our preferred reading (defended at greater length in Blili-Hamelin (2019)), this involves treating the authoritative standpoint in determining what particular ends and needs to pursue as the person's own embodied point of view. As embodied, one's take on one's needs is irreducibly influenced by a mixture of subjective "whim and natural necessity" – including factors like bias and prejudice, urges, and emotions (EPR: §182). As such, the priorities that show up from the first-person embodied point of view are always in part arbitrary. However, arbitrariness doesn't undermine the authority of a person's take on her own needs in determining which needs are worth pursuing. Rather, with the authority of concrete persons, making "the essential and final determining factors [in determining what needs to pursue and how. . .] subjective opinion and one's particular arbitrary will, which win in this sphere their right, their merit, and their dignity" (EPR: §206).
36. This is our preferred way of paraphrasing the point Hegel makes in the following passage: "Happiness is distinguished from well-being only in this, that happiness is conceived just as an immediate reality [*Dasein* – more specifically, from PM: §480, as *ought* [*soll*]], whereas well-being is regarded as justifiable in relation to morality". (*Philosophy of Spirit (Encyclopedia)* §505) In the *Philosophy of Right*, the normative claims to welfare are first articulated in morality (EPR: §119f) and come back throughout the account of civil society.
37. Hegel (by his lights) loudly signals the fallible character of the "reconciling element within" (*das Versöhnende innerhalb*) civil society by characterising

- the problem as belonging to the “sphere of finitude” and the solution as taking the form of the “understanding” (*Verstand*). (EPR: §189) Blili-Hamelin (2019: ch. 5) argues that the problem of jointly satisfying the welfare of each is a local area of the finite world that requires a fallibilist approach: where genuinely protecting the welfare of each is a tremendously demanding task that a rational social order must (fallibly) succeed at. The protection, although fallible, must be so emphatic as to ceaselessly prove the social order worthy of the trust of *each of its members*.
38. Namely EPR: §187.
 39. We are here following Novakovic’s (2017: 95–103) helpful classification and reconstruction of these aspects of *Bildung*.
 40. Novakovic (2017: 96).
 41. *Ibid.*, pp. 97–98.
 42. Namely “According to Hegel, participation in the market compels us to disregard those features that distinguish people from one another, particularly their nationality, ethnicity, and religion. In other words, *Bildung* allows us to regard every human being as first and foremost a human being, and only secondarily as the member of some narrower community” (Novakovic 2017: 99).
 43. Namely EPR: §200.
 44. EPR: §200A.
 45. Heisenberg (2018: 9).
 46. Hegel draws an explicit connection between the risk of falling into poverty and the inequality in resources, skills, and opportunities that civil society allows: “Not only caprice, however, but also contingencies, physical conditions, and factors grounded in external circumstances (see §200) may reduce people to poverty” (EPR: §241. Hegel’s own reference – namely to §200).
 47. EPR: §200A.
 48. For a more detailed attempt at exploring this direction, in the context of a broader investigation of the methodological innovations of the *Philosophy of Right* and the *Realphilosophie*, see Blili-Hamelin (2019), Chapter 5.
 49. Adorno (2019: 19–20).
 50. Namely Adorno (2019: 20).
 51. Adorno (2019: 21).
 52. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
 53. *Ibid.*
 54. Adorno (1965: 153); see also Testa (2016) and Särkelä (2020).
 55. Adorno (2019: 24).
 56. Namely Adorno (2019: 25).
 57. Namely Adorno (2019: 19f).
 58. Adorno (2019: 26).
 59. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
 60. *Ibid.*
 61. *Ibid.*
 62. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
 63. What Hegel articulated as the tensions between the particularity of individuals and the social order’s unity.
 64. Adorno (2019: 48).
 65. *Ibid.*
 66. Mill (2003: 122, 144).
 67. Adorno (2019: 43).
 68. Adorno (1959: 116).
 69. Adorno (2019: 43).

70. Ibid., p. 35. On Adorno's account of affects and emotions, see Gregoratto (2020).
71. Adorno (1957: 213).
72. Namely Adorno (1965: 148–149).
73. Namely Freud (1993: 109–121).
74. Adorno (2006: 76).
75. Namely Adorno (1966b: 87).
76. Adorno (2019: 68).
77. Ibid.
78. Adorno (1959: 119–120).
79. Adorno (1966b: 92).
80. Adorno (1959: 121–122).
81. Namely LPWH: 55.
82. Namely LPWH: 63.
83. Namely LPWH: 68–93, especially 74: “This vast conglomeration of volition, interests, and activities is the sum total of instruments and means which the world spirit employs to accomplish its end, to make this end conscious and to give it reality”.
84. Adorno (1932: 268).
85. Here, Adorno has affinities with contemporary accounts of epistemic injustice. E.g. Fricker (2007).
86. GS6: 203 – translation modified.
87. The following passage provides a particularly vivid description of how the deformation of *Bann* can turn individuals into instruments of that broken promise: “These promises – promises that are implicit in the social contract itself, that is to say, in the exchange relationship – that we shall one day be compensated for our present sacrifices, or shall really gain greater security, these promises are doomed to disappointment over and over again. . . . People manage to come to terms with this phenomenon, with the realisation that their own rationality is irrational, and that they do not obtain what their rational behavior promises, only by making an irrational response. It is to accept the course of the world, to identify with it, and to make it their own” (LHF: 75–76).
88. GS6: 204.
89. GS6: 203.
90. Namely GS6: 343.
91. Adorno (1969: 12).

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Part II

Intersubjectivity and Ethical Life

3 Reactualising Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*

Honneth and Habermas

James Gledhill

A widely accepted story of the way in which the tradition of Frankfurt School Critical Theory has developed in the aftermath of the work of the first generation goes something like this. While the work of the first generation had established the tasks of a critical theory of society in the Hegelian-Marxist tradition, the most significant work of the founding fathers of critical theory, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's 1947 *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2002), bequeathed to the second generation the task of establishing the normative foundations of critique. As the most important representative of this second generation, Jürgen Habermas's turn to the paradigm of communicative reason represents his attempt to provide these missing normative foundations. As developed in his moral and political theories, Habermas's approach is highly and singularly Kantian in nature. It establishes procedural conceptions of moral and political justice in abstraction from the normative substance of existing social institutions.

In contrast with this approach, the work of the major figure of the third generation, Axel Honneth, takes a Hegelian turn that reunites theory and practice, reactualising the approach of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* by uncovering principles of justice within existing institutions. The leading light of the fourth generation of the Frankfurt School, Rainer Forst, further develops Habermas's Kantian approach. In the debate to determine the future direction of the tradition of Frankfurt School critical theory, one might try to resurrect the kind of radical critique practiced by the first generation, but otherwise the most salient choice is between joining Honneth's "Team Hegel" or Forst's "Team Kant".

In this chapter, I challenge most, if not all, of the key points of this standard story. My focus will be on the mature political theories of Honneth and Habermas, as set out principally in *Freedom's Right* (Honneth 2014) and *Between Facts and Norms* (Habermas 1996), and my main aim will be to question the widespread perception that it is Honneth rather than Habermas who has the best claim to continuing the Hegelian legacy of critical theory. I will argue instead that Honneth and Habermas adopt different ways of understanding and appropriating Hegel's

work, and indeed that Habermas's approach can justifiably claim to be the more convincing reactualisation of Hegel's legacy.

It should be noted at the outset that there are significant respects in which both Honneth and Habermas share a broadly Hegelian conception of the nature and tasks of critical theory. Honneth identifies the unity of Frankfurt School Critical Theory as lying in the "intertwining of theory and history".¹ The tradition "insists on a mediation of theory and history in a concept of socially effective rationality".² This rational potential may be incompletely actualised, leading to social pathologies. The idea of a social pathology originates in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* as a "deficient rationality" or the "insufficient appropriation of an 'objectively' already possible reason".³ At this level of generality, Habermas could certainly be said to share this conception. However, there are also significant differences. Important among these is the fact that Honneth rejects the restricted focus of Habermas's political theory on the domain of law and its relationship to democracy. Following Hegel's understanding of the philosophy of right as concerned with the *complete realm of actualised freedom*, Honneth argues that to truly reconnect theory and practice – in the sense both of the empirical studies of social science and concrete struggles of social movements – it is necessary for a critical social theory to encompass a complete range of intersubjective relations, including personal relationships, cooperation within the market economy, and discourse within the democratic public sphere.⁴

Related to this difference in focus is a difference in method. For Honneth, the method of normative reconstruction concerns making explicit the goals and unfulfilled promise of social struggles for recognition and justice. In Habermas's political theory, by contrast, a rational reconstruction of a constitution-making practice is intended to make explicit the radical democratic presuppositions of a practice of collective self-government through the medium of law. Both approaches can stake a claim to being reactualisations of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Honneth's approach can be regarded as a *sociological-historical reactualisation*. It translates the aspirations of Hegel's philosophy of right into the language of classical sociological theory and grounds these claims in a historical reconstruction of the development of social spheres of intersubjectivity. This seeks to render Hegel's text fruitful for debates in contemporary political philosophy by extracting from it a conception of social freedom, and employing this as a conception of justice against which to assess struggles for recognition and justice in the three key social spheres of ethical life identified by Hegel. Habermas's approach, by contrast, can be seen as a *philosophical-juridical reactualisation*. In contrast to Honneth's broad focus, it is limited to understanding the systemic relationship between law and democracy. In doing so, the method employed seeks to continue Hegel's philosophical aspirations under revised social conditions in the form of a reconstructive social theory.

I begin in Section I by identifying the key features of Honneth's sociological-historical reactualisation. I identify a number of shortcomings in this approach that ultimately derive from the way in which Honneth seeks to detach Hegel's legal and political theory from its place within Hegel's encompassing philosophical system. My claim here, though, is *not* that a defence of the continuing relevance of Hegel's practical philosophy is bound up with a defence of the continuing relevance of its background metaphysics. Rather, I go on to argue that Habermas makes necessary revisions to Hegel's project, which establish the basis upon which he then goes on to develop his moral and political theories. In Section II, I prepare the way for this analysis by considering what it means to reactualise a canonical text, construing this as a hermeneutical dialogue that involves both an openness to learning from a text and a willingness to judge the continuing cogency of its claims from a contemporary perspective. In Section III, I seek to uncover the Hegelian aspects of Habermas's practical philosophy by unpacking his claim that he engages in a Hegelian-Marxist appropriation of Kant's moral and legal philosophy. On this basis, in Section IV, I offer an interpretation of Habermas's philosophical-juridical reactualisation of the *Philosophy of Right*. On this alternative view, what remains living in Hegel's practical philosophy is not a substantive model of society and an ethical ideal of individual and collective self-realisation, but rather a methodological aspiration to develop a systematic understanding of society in such a way that social reproduction can be understood as at least inchoately rational and subject to human direction.

I

Honneth's Sociological-Historical Reactualisation of Hegel

Honneth's *Freedom's Right* brings to fruition the project announced in his Spinoza lectures of 1999 titled *Suffering from Indeterminacy: An Attempt at a Reactualization of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Honneth 2000).⁵ Honneth laments that, whether in Rawlsian political philosophy or Habermasian critical theory, or indeed in "communitarian" reactions to the supposed dominance of an abstract Kantian liberalism, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* "has so far failed to exert the slightest influence on the current debates in political philosophy".⁶ While there has been a proliferation of scholarship on Hegel's practical philosophy, this has often taken place in comparative isolation from developments in political philosophy. Though many debates in contemporary political philosophy attest to the felt need to bridge a gulf that has opened up between pure normative theory and social analysis, neither in the work of Rawls and Habermas themselves nor in reactions to both philosophers has there been an attempt at a "systematic reactualization"⁷ of Hegel's work. In the next section, I will consider in more detail what it means to reactualise a

historical text. For now, though, it suffices to note that Honneth's reactualisation of Hegel in *Freedom's Right* has the following features.

First, concerning the orientation of the project, in common with his initial statement of this research programme, Honneth's reactualisation of Hegel takes place from the standpoint of contemporary debates about social justice that have centred on the work of Rawls. In Honneth's view, such debates too often take place in abstraction from social analysis. Under Rawlsian ideal theory, normative rules are drawn up in isolation from *Sittlichkeit*, the social norms embodied in existing social practices and modern institutions.⁸ A theory of justice established on this basis is concerned with philosophical justification, with practical questions understood as issues of application that are the province of social science.

Hegel's work offers perhaps the most influential model for closing this gap between theory and practice, providing a template for developing a theory of justice by way of an analysis of society. This means, second, that the orientation of the project is sociological, looking at the constitutive spheres of society understood as embodying particular values.

Third, like Hegel, Honneth proceeds on the basis that the only overarching value that can legitimise the exercise of political power in a modern liberal democratic society is that of individual freedom. The constitutive spheres of society are understood as each institutionalising, however incompletely, an aspect of the experience and promise of individual freedom.

Fourth, the idea that social practices and institutions embody incompletely developed values that make an "immanent claim to realization"⁹ is the key to understanding the method of normative reconstruction that Honneth employs. He argues that we can only gain the necessary orientation towards the future demands of social justice if we understand historical struggles for social justice, the way in which they sought to realise institutional promises of freedom, and the way these claims are still to be redeemed.

Overall, then, Honneth's approach may be understood as a *sociological-historical* one. Within the systematic structure offered by Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, Honneth narrates the trajectory of struggles for the more complete realisation of justice, not with an aspiration to fidelity to the historical record, but rather from the point of view of a sociological concern with the significance of the constitutive values of practices and institutions in terms of the reproduction of the normative infrastructure of society. Honneth refers to this an "indirect reactualization"¹⁰ of Hegel's text. As he puts it:

We, the children of a materially enlightened era, cannot hold onto the idealistic monism in which Hegel anchored his dialectical concept of Spirit. Hence we are forced to find another footing on which to base his idea that objective Spirit is realized in social institutions.¹¹

The controversial claim here is not only that Hegel's practical philosophy can stand independently of the idealist metaphysics in which it is embedded, but also that from a contemporary perspective a sociological-historical reconstruction provides a substitute for this framework. A direct reactualisation would be one that sought to rehabilitate Hegelian metaphysics and substantialist conception of the state; an indirect reactualisation employs an alternative sociological framework within which to seek to capture Hegel's insights into the normative infrastructure and processes of social reproduction of modern societies.

In a later reply to critics, Honneth is even more explicit about the way in which the method of normative reconstruction seeks to reactualise a Hegelian framework. The intention is to find for "‘Objective Spirit [*Geistes*]' a post-metaphysical equivalent for what Hegel called the 'Logic of the Concept'".¹² Spirit can no longer legitimately be thought of as actualising itself through a necessary historical teleology. Instead, Honneth adopts the sociological idea, which he also finds present in the work of John Dewey, that normative ideas, as one manifestation of Spirit, "have the ability to shape and remodel social reality in accordance with their own content",¹³ and that it is through social struggles that this potential is realised. Whereas, for Hegel, Spirit transforms social reality through the self-reflexive process of its unfolding self-knowledge, for Honneth, this process can only be understood as the achievement of existing social actors who struggle to realise the unfulfilled promise of historically developing social norms.

Honneth's method of normative reconstruction, and related understanding of the role of critical theory in diagnosing social pathologies, has been subjected to sustained criticism.¹⁴ In limiting its normative horizon to the ideals already present, if inadequately realised, within social struggles, it has been held to uncritically affirm the existing social order and limit itself to a reformist orientation towards change. In response to these criticisms, Honneth seeks to more clearly discern how the trajectory of unfulfilled social and political progress that he has identified points towards a very different, indeed socialist, social order (Honneth 2015, 2017b). I will argue that Honneth's idea of normative reconstruction is problematic, but I am happy to accept Honneth's argument that there is no alternative to legitimising modern social institutions in terms of the value of social freedom (Honneth 2015). My more modest claim is that Honneth's approach is insufficiently dialectical, and because its overall orientation is insufficiently systematic.

Honneth's approach is insufficiently dialectical in that it tends towards a positivistic stance of registering the existence of certain value spheres without understanding itself as part of a historical process of the unfolding of those values, one in which the theory itself can play a role in their actualisation. This is closely related to the idea that it is insufficiently systematic. Honneth takes the *Philosophy of Right* as more or less a

template for social analysis. To be sure, he does abstract from the details of Hegel's social theory, but as Karin de Boer observes, in Honneth's view "Hegel's account of ethical life can be brought to bear on the contemporary world by putting new contents in the boxes he provided, or by adding new boxes for the contents he provided".¹⁵ In doing so, Honneth has a broad understanding of Hegel's idea of Right, which he takes to refer to "those elements of social reality that, by virtue of enabling and realising individual freedom, possessed both substance and legitimacy".¹⁶ However, this gives insufficient attention to Hegel's understanding of the state as the culmination of Right and of social reproduction as the reproduction of an integrated system of Right. The question of why the state is the highest form of Right, and therefore of the role the state plays in integrating other social spheres, is not sufficiently answered (Bernstein 2010).

Indeed, serious reservations can be raised about whether Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* can be read in terms of Honneth's theory of recognition (De Boer 2013; Krijnen 2017). If these criticisms are right, then it threatens to reduce the distance between Honneth's position and the liberal models that he criticises. Rather than a critical appropriation and reactualisation of Hegel's model, Honneth's approach would rather represent simply an attempt to apply a Hegelian theory of justice as social freedom, developed on the basis of theoretical argument rather than systematic social and philosophical reconstruction, to the social spheres identified by Hegel.

These concerns relate to an important shift in Honneth's understanding of Hegel. In his early work, notably *The Struggle for Recognition* (Honneth 1995), Honneth shared with Habermas a diagnosis of the problems and limitations of Hegel's philosophy. Both Habermas and the early Honneth looked to Hegel's Jena philosophy for an idea of intersubjectivity that they saw as occluded by the totalising unfolding of *Geist* in Hegel's mature work. But Honneth no longer regards Hegel as sacrificing his initial intersubjectivism, with the result that the theory of recognition can, he now believes, legitimately and fruitfully be applied to reinterpreting Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*.¹⁷ In Section III, I offer reasons for thinking that this is a mistake and that a more fundamental reckoning with Hegel's philosophical system is necessary to reactualise the framework of Hegel's practical philosophy. Since this claim depends upon a somewhat different view of what it means to reactualise a historical text than that provided by Honneth, I want to turn first to the question of what it could mean to reactualise Hegel.

II

What Does It Mean to Reactualise Hegel's Philosophy of Right?

As we have seen, Honneth aims to reactualise Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* by understanding how the social spheres of personal relationships, the market economy, and the democratic constitutional state still make

an unredeemed promise of social freedom. But how should this idea of a reactualisation – or what Robert Pippin (2015) and Robert Brandom (2002) have referred to as a “reanimation” – be understood, and what criteria should be applied to determine its success?

At its simplest, the idea of a reactualisation means breathing new life into a text, so that the text once again speaks to us in such a way as to make a normative claim upon how we should think and act. The success of such an enterprise depends upon striking a balance that avoids two kinds of historical anachronism. It should avoid both (i) seeking to apply ideas that are outmoded to the present and (ii) reading into historical texts contemporary ideas. Canonical texts are neither to be regarded as a philosophical heritage to be preserved unchanged nor as simply a collection of ideas and arguments to be ransacked for material that speaks to a subsequent socio-political concern and context.

Rather than ventriloquising a text in this way such that it becomes a proxy for contemporary ideas, one should approach the idea of a text speaking to us as an invitation to a dialogue in which one approaches a text as an interlocutor in an ongoing conversation, with a willingness to have one's ideas challenged and to learn something. But the corollary of the idea of being open to changing one's mind is the willingness to make critical judgements that differentiate between those aspects of a text that are central to its philosophical significance, and therefore of ongoing value, and those that are more peripheral.¹⁸

This assumes a particular conception of philosophy as a constructive, historically evolving practice that seeks to use the past as a resource by conveying its ideas into the present, rather than highlighting historical change and discontinuity. As Brandom (2002) has brought out in his meta-philosophical reflections on “talking with a tradition”, such a historical understanding of philosophy expresses an imperative of systematisation. Clearly, one value of Hegel's philosophy is that it itself embodies this approach to reading texts in the history of philosophy. Thus, when one reads Hegel from this point of view, one is applying to Hegel's texts the approach that Hegel himself applied to historical texts. Such ideas can also be expressed in the idiom of Gadamerian hermeneutics (Gadamer 2004). Historical texts are conveyed by a tradition of interpretation and reinterpretation. Interpretation takes place from within a horizon of understanding that is determined by a situatedness in history. In the process of understanding, our preconceptions and our horizon of understanding itself are susceptible to change. A successful process of interpretation and understanding involves a *fusion of horizons* in which a new context of meaning is created through integrating a historical text into the context of understanding of the present. Indeed, as will become important in the next section, there is an important difference between the Gadamerian way of understanding the open-ended unfolding of a tradition, and the Hegelian idea of historical understanding as reaching a culmination in absolute knowing.

Framed in terms of striking a balance between learning from a text while also being prepared to render critical judgements that separate the central meaning from outmoded or no longer compelling ideas, such an approach might sound commonsensical. However, it tends to be controversial, with critics protesting against a lack of fidelity to the totality of a thinker's presuppositions and systematic concerns.¹⁹ One finds few exemplars of this reactualisation approach in contemporary practical philosophy. Reactualisation is easier to recognise in the form of what Pippin (2020) has called the "remaining points of contact" institutional approach, where *relevance* – itself of course an institutional buzzword – is understood to require as much as possible extracting some kind of blueprint for institutional reform from historical texts that can then be applied in the present. Far more difficult to do and to discern is the approach of coming to grips with a problem that animates a text and then putting that model productively to work in understanding and intervening in the present.

How do the approaches of Honneth and Habermas fare when assessed against this standard, one that both can be seen to broadly accept? With respect to Honneth, his approach to reading Hegel from the point of view of contemporary debates about social justice shows little self-reflection on the changing philosophical context that this represents. Post-Rawlsian debates about justice have had a strikingly narrow focus compared to Rawls's own work, let alone that of Rousseau, Kant, or Hegel. In this regard, a central preoccupation has been with refining a specification of the metric of distributive justice, as opposed to broader questions about the justification of a conception of justice and its realisation in social institutions.²⁰ Moreover, it is questionable whether Honneth's sociological-historical approach to reading Hegel succeeds in finding an adequate substitute for Hegel's metaphysical system. Here, Pippin argues convincingly against Honneth that in any attempt to reactualise Hegel's thought:

the self-constitution of *Geist* and its practices over time will depend on an account of the self-constitution of reason, the logic of which, involving strong claims of necessity and unavoidability, is to be provided by the *Science of Logic*. No Hegelian account of the historically achieved rationality of the structure of modern social and political institutions can dispense with such an argument.²¹

For Hegel, reason, as self-constituting and self-grounding, makes no appeal to a given or foundation beyond itself.²² While Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is not dependent upon his *Logic* in the sense of simply representing the application of Hegel's metaphysics to the domain of social freedom, a reanimation of the text, in terms of the self-constitution of *Geist*, can indeed be seen to depend upon a reactualisation of Hegel's idea of the self-constitution of reason.

Habermas, as I have suggested, engages in a *philosophical-juridical* reactualisation of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, in contrast to Honneth's sociological-historical approach. First, in terms of his focus, rather than being concerned with historical struggles for recognition and justice, Habermas reads Hegel from the juridical point of view of the historical practice of constitution-making. Habermas's text can thus be located within the *tradition of public law* (in the sense of Loughlin (2010)) rather than within the tradition of theories of social justice. I will say more about this in Section IV. Second, in terms of method, Habermas seeks to develop a "post-metaphysical" philosophical alternative to Hegel's dialectical metaphysics. As opposed to Honneth's approach, which translates Hegel's philosophical ambitions into the framework of sociological theory, Habermas confronts directly – and seeks to revise – Hegel's philosophical framework. This is neither a direct nor an indirect strategy of reactualisation in Honneth's sense. That is, it neither applies Hegel's dialectical metaphysics nor simply abandons it, but rather in a hermeneutical fashion seeks *to use Hegel to move beyond Hegel*. This coming to terms with Hegel and his legacy frames the way in which Habermas then reads Kant.

In discussing his reconstructive approach, Habermas has observed that it originates "in a Hegelian-Marxist appropriation of Kant's moral and legal philosophy".²³ In the next section, I seek to unpack this claim so as to understand the standpoint from which Habermas reinterprets Kant. The view that emerges, I will suggest, is very different from that which has become the accepted wisdom regarding Habermas's position and is reaffirmed and reinforced in some of Honneth's more unqualified remarks.

III

Habermas's Hegelian-Marxist Appropriation of Kant's Moral and Legal Philosophy

A first point to note in understanding the nature of Habermas's Hegelian-Marxist appropriation of Kant concerns the formative motivations of Habermas's theory of communicative action. It originates after all in an attempt to reconstruct Marx's historical materialism (Habermas 1979). Historical materialism represented for Habermas the leading example of a "theory of society conceived with a practical intention".²⁴ In attempting to link theory and *praxis*, it "aims at achieving an explanation of social evolution which is so comprehensive that it embraces the interrelationships of the theory's own origins and application".²⁵

Habermas was always sceptical of accounting for the emancipatory possibilities of social evolution in terms of the category of labour and the development of labour power. Whether in Marx or later Marxists, he

takes the “production paradigm”²⁶ to be obsolete. He finds an alternative in the category of linguistic interaction and the role of communication in the evolution of society. And indeed, Habermas finds an intersubjective conception of linguistic interaction in Hegel’s Jena lectures on the *Philosophy of Spirit*.²⁷ Whereas these had usually been accorded a subordinate status, understood as simply preparatory to Hegel’s later *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Habermas finds in them the lineaments of a philosophical road not taken. In the judgement that Honneth once shared but later abandoned, in these early lectures, unlike in Hegel’s later work:

it is not the spirit in the absolute movement of reflecting on itself which manifests in, among other things, language, labor, and moral relationships, but rather, it is the dialectical interconnections between linguistic symbolization, labor, and interaction which determine the concept of spirit.²⁸

That being said, Habermas’s most consequential reckoning with the Hegelian legacy is to be found later in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Habermas 1987a), originally published in 1985, four years after his two-volume *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas 1984, 1987b). Indeed, the two works should be seen as complementing one another: *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* is a history of philosophy with a systematic social-theoretical intent, while *The Theory of Communicative Action* is a historically informed systematic social theory.²⁹ Habermas’s historical narrative in the former work provides the broader context within which to make sense of his famous remark in the latter that “[f]rom the beginning, critical theory laboured over the difficulty of giving an account of its own normative foundations”.³⁰ Habermas’s theory of communicative reason – or more precisely his discourse theory – has often been seen as providing the Kantian normative foundations for his moral and political theories. However, this fails to take account of the way in which Habermas’s fundamental philosophical orientation remains that of a Young, or Left, Hegelian. As he puts it:

we remain contemporaries of the Young Hegelians. . . . Hegel inaugurated the discourse of modernity; the Young Hegelians permanently established it, that is, they freed the idea of a critique nourished on the spirit of modernity from the burden of the Hegelian concept of reason.³¹

What needs to be explained, then, is the conception of philosophy that emerges from a path of thought that leads “from Kant to Hegel and back again”.³²

Returning to what James Gordon Finlayson (2007, 2009) has called Habermas’s “original objection” to the failure of the previous generation of

Frankfurt School Critical Theory to give an account of its own normative foundations, it is evident that the remark can be given a number of different interpretations, depending upon how one interprets "normative" and the idea of "foundations" or grounding. Finlayson distinguishes between two senses of both terms, leading to four possible positions. First, foundations could be understood as requiring a *full-blown theory*, or it could instead require only that *reasons be adduced sufficient to justify the conclusions reached*. Second, normative could be understood in a narrow sense as *moral*, where moral is equivalent to what Hegel means by *Moralität*, or it could be understood in a broad sense.

Finlayson plausibly attributes to Honneth the view that what is required is a moral theory. This is on the basis of Honneth's remark that it is with "communicative ethics Habermas . . . has attempted to justify the normative claims of a critical social theory".³³ As Finlayson rightly observes, understood in this way, Habermas's discourse ethics – or more specifically his discourse theory of morality – is not the right kind of theory to provide first-order moral grounds for critique. Finlayson proposes instead that what Habermas has in mind is that critical social theory faced a justification gap in which its conclusions were not supported by *adequate reasons*. Moreover, the reasons Habermas adduces are not moral reasons in a narrow sense. Rather, one should take seriously the medical analogy present in the idea of diagnosing social pathologies and see them as normative reasons in a *broad sense*, presupposing an idea of a well-functioning society.

While this response to Honneth's idea of the normative foundations required by critical social theory is convincing as far as it goes, here I want to propose an alternative even more fundamental, or perhaps deflationary, interpretation of Habermas's original objection. A more natural, and I think compelling, way to understand Habermas's statement is to see it as claiming that Adorno and Horkheimer were unable to provide an account of the normative foundations upon which their critique of society *already* depended. That is, they were unable to explain reflexively the normative grounds upon which they stood and the historical origins and robustness of these grounds. The very possibility of critique exemplified in the work of Adorno and Horkheimer, then, contradicts its content. It is unable to account for the presuppositions of its own performance.

Therefore it is not so much that critical social theory needs to be given normative grounds that it lacks, but rather that it needs to reflexively understand the normatively integrated communicative social practices which have stubbornly resisted total imprisonment in the "iron cage" of instrumental rationality, and continue to provide the grounds of critical social theory's own possibility.³⁴ As Habermas puts it, if Adorno and Horkheimer are committed to the continuation of critique, then "they will have to leave at least one rational criterion intact for their explanation of the corruption of all rational criteria".³⁵ If this is right, then

what critical theory lacks, according to Habermas's original objection, is a reflexive account of its own historical origins and possibility that can provide a post-Marxian substitute for what Habermas identified as the key promise of historical materialism, and an integral part of its role in achieving emancipation.

Habermas notes that Adorno and Horkheimer are well aware of the performative contradiction that *Dialectic of Enlightenment* embodies, but they take there to be no escape from it.³⁶ To simply note this paradox does not therefore undermine their position. What is required is a more comprehensive reconstructive genealogy which traces back this paradox to its origins and then establishes an alternative route that leads out of it. Habermas's starting point, then, is that it is necessary to reactualise a Young Hegelian perspective on the philosophical discourse of modernity. Like Honneth, Habermas claims that the horizon of modernity has not been surpassed and its values remain unexhausted. Both, following Hegel, hold to the conviction that a modern social order can only be legitimised in terms of the value of freedom. Moreover, modernity has to provide itself with its own immanent justification. Since Hegel's (putatively) teleological metaphysics is unsustainable, we are faced with the challenge of translating these claims into the terms of social theory. Habermas seeks to chart a course for a path not taken. This consists in his well-known claim that a paradigm shift is required from the philosophy of the subject, or the "philosophy of consciousness", to an intersubjective "philosophy of mutual understanding".

The philosophy of the subject follows an epistemological paradigm. In Hegel, the unfolding of *Geist* is understood as progressive self-knowledge, and the starting point is the individual's self-relation. The individual and the universal are unified in the absolute through the self-knowledge of an evolving macro-subject. The political corollary of this is a strong institutionalism in which the individual, and the individual's will, is ultimately subsumed within the state. The philosophy of mutual understanding, on the other hand, works within the paradigm of the philosophy of language. Rather than beginning with an individual's relation to self, it begins from the *intersubjective* perspective of subjects engaged in relations of mutual understanding. The notion of a critique of subjects' self-relation, designed to result in a process of conversion from an individual to a universal perspective, is replaced by that of a rational reconstruction that seeks to make explicit the implicit presuppositions of the linguistic and legal practices through which intersubjective relations are established.

Now, Habermas's reading of Hegel can certainly be challenged. Pippin, for example, rejects this line of criticism, believing that, for Hegel, the reconciliation promised ideally by modernity is not something that can be achieved once and for all.³⁷ But my concern here, though, is with what it means to reactualise Hegel's thought and, more specifically, to reactualise

it within the tradition of critical theory. In addition to whether the more deflationary reading of Spirit proposed by Pippin and other post-Kantian interpreters of Hegel measures up to Hegel's own standards, there is the more pressing and substantive question of the capacity of the Hegelian framework to provide the basis of a critical social theory that seeks to provide orientation to the present and has to understand itself reflexively as itself part of the social processes it analyses.³⁸ As Habermas puts it:

Hegel has ultimately to deny to the self-understanding of modernity the possibility of a critique of modernity. The critique of a subjectivity puffed up into an absolute power ironically turns into a reproach of the philosopher against the limitations of subjects who have not yet understood either him or the course of history.³⁹

From Habermas's reconstruction of the philosophical discourse of modernity, it is clear that the recovery of Kant's practical philosophy must proceed *via* Hegel. In the case of both his discourse theory of morality and his discourse theory of law and democracy, normative principles are sustained in an ongoing reflexive project of self-legislation: *context-transcending Kantian principles* defended on a *Hegelian immanent methodological basis*. Habermas's comment in relation to the programme of discourse ethics could serve as a motto for his project as a whole. Discourse ethics picks up the Hegelian aspiration to oppose both the abstract universality of justice and the concrete particularism of the common good, but it "picks up this basic Hegelian aspiration to redeem it with Kantian means".⁴⁰

Habermas's meta-philosophical reconstruction of the philosophical discourse of modernity goes hand in hand with a theory of contemporary society. His development of a procedural conception of reason reflects not only a philosophical concern with overcoming the aporias of the philosophy of the subject, and to free reason from entanglement in a metaphysical or religious beyond that transcends the inner-worldly experience of subjects, but also with how such a conception of communicative reason is informed by a social theory of contemporary *Sittlichkeit*. This too can be seen to reflect a move "from Kant to Hegel and back again". Following the neo-Kantian analysis of Max Weber, Habermas describes the rationalisation of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*.

In this process, the three forms of reason identified in Kant's three critiques – scientific, practical, and aesthetic – take on social form. The lifeworld becomes divided into resources related to culture, society, and personality. There is a profound ambivalence in Habermas's view: "[r]ationalisation of the lifeworld means differentiation and condensation at once – a thickening of the floating web of intersubjective threads that simultaneously holds together the ever more sharply differentiated components of culture, society, and person".⁴¹ As the process of

social rationalisation pulls the lifeworld apart into differentiated value spheres, which then develop in accordance with their own logics, the communicative bonds that hold the lifeworld together have to bear a greater weight.

On the basis of a definition of *Geist* as the “normative realm of all our normatively articulated performances, practices, and institutions, and everything that makes them possible and that they make possible”, Brandom has observed that “Habermas is the foremost contemporary theorist of Hegelian *Geist*”.⁴² The point here is not simply that Habermas offers a different vision of the nature of *Sittlichkeit*. Rather, in true Hegelian fashion, Habermas tells a historical story in which Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* is sublimated into (neo-)Kantian procedures of justification. As he puts it, discourse ethics “deprives practical reason of all specific normative contents and sublimates it in the form of a procedure for justifying possible normative contents”.⁴³ Corresponding to this social theory is a modest conception of the role of philosophy. Gone are the claims of “first philosophy” and the assertion of the superiority of theory over practice, with philosophy instead playing the role of stand-in for reconstructive empirical sciences and interpreter between them.⁴⁴ Philosophy on this view continues to pursue its core role of pursuing fundamental questions of human self-understanding, but it does so as the guardian of the medium of a reason that is now concerned with interpretation rather than unification.⁴⁵

Before turning to Habermas’s political theory, it is important to note not only the links between Habermas’s own reconstructive history of philosophy and his systematic reconstructive political theory, but also the relationship in which these projects stand to what is perhaps their most important competitor, the systems theory of Niklas Luhmann. Luhmann’s own systematic social theory represents a rival to Habermas’s version in the sense that both aim for something of the scope of Hegel’s philosophical system, but there are also deeper affinities. Luhmann’s radicalism can be seen to lie in the attempt at a “Hegelian *Aufhebung* (sublation) of Hegel’s philosophy”,⁴⁶ where Hegel’s philosophy is understood to represent the standpoint of philosophy itself. This would be a sublation of the point of view of philosophy that by extension would also apply to Habermas’s attempt to continue in some way the Hegelian-Marxist tradition. What this serves to emphasise is the following: what is at stake in Habermas’s philosophy in general, and his political theory in particular, is the very continuation of Hegel’s problem of the self-grounding of reason and of society *as philosophical problems*.

In concluding these background reflections, then, in what sense is Habermas’s philosophical orientation ultimately Hegelian? In what sense, that is, can he be said to engage in a Hegelian-Marxist appropriation of Kant’s moral and legal philosophy? I have described how Habermas finds

a Hegelian provenance for the substance of his view of communicative reason in Hegel's idea of linguistic interaction, but more fundamentally, I have argued that the form of Habermas's philosophical orientation is *Hegelian in the way in which it uses Hegel to go beyond Hegel*. It changes the terms on which the self-understanding of reason and modernity is understood so that the same problem – that is, Hegel's problem, or at least that of the Young Hegelians – of the self-critique of a historically situated reason continues to speak to us.

IV

Habermas's Philosophical-Juridical Reactualisation of Hegel

In a Hegelian mould, Habermas's Preface to *Between Facts and Norms* reflects on the role of philosophy in relation to the state and, striking a defiant pose, protests against the abandonment of radical democratic ideals. It opens with the observation that:

In Germany the philosophy of law has long ceased to be a matter just for philosophers. If I scarcely mention the name of Hegel and rely more on the Kantian theory of law, this also expresses my desire to avoid a model that sets unattainable standards for us. Indeed, it is no accident that legal philosophy, in search of contact with social reality, has migrated into the law schools. However, I also want to avoid the technical jurisprudence focused on the foundations of criminal law. What could once be coherently embraced in the concepts of Hegelian philosophy now demands a pluralistic approach that combines the perspectives of moral theory, social theory, legal theory, and the sociology and history of law. . . . Philosophical concepts no longer constitute an independent language, or at any rate not an encompassing system that assimilates everything into itself. Rather, they provide a means for the reconstructive appropriation of scientific knowledge.⁴⁷

The absence of explicit discussion of Hegel from the text, beyond the occasional mention, and the decision to focus on the Kantian theory of law may reasonably come as a surprise given that in many respects Habermas's project appears to resemble Hegel's. Andrew Buchwalter, for example, notes that Habermas shares many of Hegel's ambitions in his *Philosophy of Right*:

Like Hegel, Habermas seeks to fashion a philosophy of right, or law, which surmounts the oppositions of empirical and normative considerations, of reason and reality, philosophical right and positive law, and facticity and validity.⁴⁸

Robert Fine goes further:

Perhaps more than any other critical theorist, Jürgen Habermas has taken up the idea of 'right' at the centre of contemporary political thought and his own magisterial work, *Between Facts and Norms*, may be read as an extended commentary on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Habermas follows in Hegel's footsteps when he expresses his concern that contemporary political theory is disintegrating into what he calls 'normative' and 'realist' camps that have no more to say to one another.⁴⁹

But if *Between Facts and Norms* is to be read as an extended commentary on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, how is one to explain the almost complete absence of explicit discussion of Hegel? The answer I think is that it is only a commentary on Hegel insofar as it is a *reactualisation* of Hegel's text. Given that Habermas takes us to remain contemporaries of the Young Hegelians, Hegel's philosophy continues to pose problems we are confronted with. But if Hegel is right about the nature of philosophy – if it is its own time comprehended in thought – then a contemporary theory of genuinely Hegelian provenance cannot but be different to Hegel's own philosophy. The Hegelian nature of Habermas's approach is therefore to be found in its *form* rather than its *focus*; it is a matter of *method* rather than *substance*. Or to put it another way, its Hegelianism is to be found in its *performative meaning* rather than in its *propositional content*.

To return to Habermas's Preface, why does he take Hegel's philosophy to set an unattainable standard for us, and in what sense does he rely instead upon a Kantian theory of law? As discussed in the previous section, philosophy can no longer seek to play a formative role in an unfolding process of ethical self-consciousness. This meta-philosophical understanding of the tasks of philosophy has, as its complement, a social theory in which contemporary societies are no longer seen as unified by an ethical self-understanding, but fragmented into value spheres governed by their own internal logics and subject to their own processes of rationalisation. Habermas's focus on the Kantian theory of law therefore reflects this view of law as the domain of the coercive regulation of external freedom rather than the more expansive Hegelian understanding of the role of law.

In seeking contact with social reality, political philosophy can no longer aspire to play a formative role in ethical self-understanding, let alone attain a standpoint of absolute knowledge. Rather, it must engage with the medium of law, render explicit its radical democratic presuppositions and seek to uncover traces of an existing reason through a sociological understanding of the contemporary public sphere. For all this, continuity with the Hegelian project is maintained in the form of a systematic understanding of the tasks of philosophy. Truth continues to

be the whole, not in the form of a social macro-subject, but in the co-constitutive relationship of law and democracy that enables the public sphere to serve as the locus of a democratic society's self-reflection and self-government. Habermas pays deference to Hegel's philosophy of right in seeking to move beyond it.⁵⁰

Habermas's overall approach is to mediate between the disciplinary perspectives of the sociology of law, represented by Luhmann, and the philosophy of justice, represented by Rawls. In this respect, one may legitimately construe it as a contemporary reincarnation of a dispute between a Hobbesian approach that focuses on positive law to the exclusion of morality and a Kantian approach that subordinates law to morality.⁵¹ The concepts of a purely normative philosophy of justice will be empty without an understanding of law as an empirical action system, while a sociological perspective that lacks hermeneutical access to internal normative meaning is blind.⁵²

Luhmann is part of a tradition of realist objections to the (rational) natural law view of society as a free association of autonomous and equal citizens. Adopting an observer's perspective, Marx sought to expose the ideological nature of this claim, but in eliminating the Marxian conception of teleological development, Luhmann radicalises a realist perspective, conceiving of society as an autopoietic (self-creating), self-referential functionalist system. Modelled on cybernetic systems, autopoiesis means that the legal system describes itself in legal terms, thereby constituting and reproducing legal acts by its own means. The sociological observer is self-referentially subsumed within the system they observe, viewing both themselves and their science as just one subsystem among others (Habermas 1996: 47–49).

How does Habermas seek to maintain a Hegelian, philosophical perspective on the rational constitution and reproduction of society? This requires a more systematic analysis than I can give here, but I want to at least indicate the framework within which such an interpretation would take place. Like Hegel, for Habermas philosophy has a circular structure which is rounded off within itself. One therefore only understands Habermas's reconstruction of the system of rights in the light of the system of institutions that is systematically unfolded from it. Much is presupposed in this starting point.

Matthew Specter (2010) has shown how *Between Facts and Norms* can be fruitfully contextualised within Habermas's sustained engagement with constitutional theory in general and the German constitutional experience in particular. In this regard, the book is both epitaph and manifesto: "epitaph for the Bonn Republic – a résumé of the achievements and limits of West German constitutionalism – and manifesto for the Berlin Republic".⁵³ On a more abstract level, the practice of democratic constitution-making, as an ongoing practice of *reinterpretation*, is also Janus-faced: it looks back to a foundational historic document,

but as a normative project, “the task of interpreting and elaborating the system of rights poses itself *anew* for each generation; as the project of a just society, a constitution articulates the horizon of expectation opening to an ever-present future”.⁵⁴

The concept of a horizon of expectation is due to Reinhart Koselleck (2004) and points in turn to the need to contextualise Habermas’s political theory within his overall meta-philosophical narrative of the philosophical discourse of modernity. Habermas’s reconstructive approach seeks to make explicit the ideals that are implicit in real social practices from the perspective of participants. A reconstructive theory of the constitutional state has as its subject the constitution-making praxis, aiming to “exhume . . . the normative meaning of a democratic constitution out of the differentiated network of the corresponding institutionalised practices”.⁵⁵ It is true that “the system of basic rights at which one arrives at the highest level of abstraction is virtually indistinguishable in form from a normative political theory”.⁵⁶ But the point remains that this apparently free-standing normative conception is offered as part of an ongoing practice of interpreting the meaning of the practice of democratic constitutionalism, and its vindication depends upon its capacity to provide orientation in understanding and intervening in social reality. It is insufficiently recognised that Habermas “never had any ambition of sketching out a normative political theory”.⁵⁷

If Habermas is not recognised as being engaged in the process of reactualising Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, then there are grounds for thinking that a way needs to be found to reactualise the perspective of Habermas’s *Between Facts and Norms* and for thinking that its reconstructive approach has so far failed to exert significant influence in the discourse of political philosophy. That is to say, without an adequate understanding of the philosophical presuppositions of Habermas’s political theory, and its relationship to the philosophical tradition, it is not possible to fully grasp the meaning of the theory and to take forward its methodological perspective. Some of Honneth’s more unqualified references to Habermas’s approach risk perpetuating these common misunderstandings.

At some points, Honneth aligns Habermas with the same kind of normative proceduralism that he attributes to Rawls (an attribution that is itself questionable). At the beginning of *Freedom’s Right*, Honneth claims that the proceduralism of Rawls and Habermas “has its point of departure in the historical congruence between independently derived principles of justice and the normative ideals of modern societies”.⁵⁸ He also refers generally to “an error that is characteristic of Kantian approaches”, where principles of justice are “arrived at over the heads and historically evolved claims of the people to which they are intended to apply . . . by means of thought experiments, or similar proceduralist expedients, and are only applied to social reality afterwards”.⁵⁹ Elsewhere, however, Honneth recognises that Habermas develops a “historically situated form

of proceduralism",⁶⁰ although without acknowledging that this does not represent a fortunate congruence of independently derived Kantian procedural principles and a historical reconstruction of the normative content of modern social reality.

As we have seen, the roots of Habermas's proceduralism lie in a complex view of the co-constitutive relationship between philosophy and contemporary society. Philosophy can no longer presuppose the existence of any specific normative substance, but it continues the Hegelian project of systematic unification. The criteria for the success of Honneth's sociological-historical reactualisation, on the other hand, are essentially empirical: they depend upon whether history does in fact develop so as to fulfil the immanent potential that has been identified.⁶¹ Honneth's approach owes much to the communitarianism of Michael Walzer and the social scientific contextualism of David Miller, which lives on as the methodological legacy of the communitarian critique of liberalism (see Honneth 2014: 119–134).

But, as Hegel puts it in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, "[t]o consider the emergence and development of determinations of right as they appear in time is a purely historical task". It "bears no relation to the philosophical approach".⁶² Philosophy does not stop at the given but establishes the criteria through which the *rationality* of existing institutions and practices can be apprehended. Habermas's reconstruction of the system of rights is situated within a philosophical reconstruction of the history of modern constitutionalism. It seeks to reconstruct the self-reconstructing character of modern legal-democratic procedures in such a way as to make explicit the inchoate rationality of the basic framework of institutions of the modern state and provide an orienting framework for empirical investigations.

To be sure, Honneth recognises the challenges posed by the rationalisation and differentiation of modern societies and he seeks to confront these in his vision of socialism. Here he remarks indeed that a critique of political economy is not enough and that instead it is necessary to offer a critique of hegemonial branches of knowledge in other subsystems.⁶³ But in Honneth's work there is little evidence of reflection on the place of, and consequent possibilities for, philosophy within this configuration.

It is here also, finally, that Habermas might prove to be the better Hegelian, not issuing instructions to the world, but rather seeking to comprehend the nature of reason in its contemporary guise and the inchoately rational nature of contemporary societies. Habermas certainly changes the nature of critique within the Frankfurt School Critical Theory tradition. It becomes not so much a critique in the sense of normative criticism, but rather an understanding of the conditions of possibility of democratic practice, which depends upon a fallible, self-critical, and self-reforming procedural reason that must continually reconstruct the social order without the possibility of substantive guidance from philosophy.

The role of philosophy in relation to politics is to continue the Hegelian project of understanding systematically the inchoately rational character of the social order through understanding the way in which the self-constitution of reason shapes and is reshaped by the institutions of the modern state. In this it seeks to resist the Luhmannian view of a society that has lost any capacity for self-representation and self-government. The system of rights of a modern constitutional state “make[s] possible the radical reformism of a self-transformation of society that is normatively required by the existing constitution itself. . . . The rose in the cross of the present may have grown pale, but it is not yet completely faded”.⁶⁴

It is not surprising that given its architectonic ambition, scope, and complexity, Habermas’s work should draw comparisons with Hegel. But I hope to have shown that the similarities are deeper than is often appreciated. On the one hand, for all his insistence that his reconstructive approach is distinct from a theory of justice, Honneth seeks to justify normative principles of justice. Habermas, on the other hand, is engaged in a different kind of enterprise. Honneth’s approach to reinterpreting Hegel is a fruitful and enlightening strategy from the perspective of debates about social justice in contemporary political philosophy. Habermas’s work, though, can be located in the tradition of the philosophy of right and can be seen to employ a Hegelian approach to philosophical interpretation in the continuation of this tradition, at the same time as it rejects many of Hegel’s social and political, and consequent philosophical, presuppositions. Honneth’s critique of procedural theories of justice developed in abstraction from social theory might have more force against the position of Forst (2014), which eschews any ambition of grounding a Kantian constructivism in a Hegelian reconstruction of the normative content of modernity. Habermas offers an alternative path. Whether that path remains open – whether it is possible, that is, to reactualise the framework of Habermas’s *Between Facts and Norms* – is very much an open question. But it is one that should not be lost sight of in assessing the nature and aspirations of critical theory.

Notes

1. Honneth (2009: 21).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 23.
4. See further the debate between Scheuerman (2017) and Honneth (2017a).
5. This was later published in expanded form as *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel’s Social Theory* (Honneth 2010). Citations are to this later version.
6. Honneth (2010: 1).
7. Ibid., p. 3.
8. While widely shared, this characterisation of Rawlsian ideal theory is open to challenge. See Gledhill (2012).
9. Honneth (2014: vii).

10. Honneth (2010: 5).
11. Honneth (2014: 3).
12. Honneth (2015: 207).
13. Ibid.
14. See e.g. Schaub (2015), Freyenhagen (2015).
15. De Boer (2013: 540).
16. Honneth (2014: 2).
17. See on this Honneth (2014: vii–viii), Zurn (2015: 27).
18. On this way of reading texts, see Pippin (2015). A strikingly similar understanding can be found in Rawls (2000). I have sought to apply this to Rawls's reading of Kant, and indeed of Hegel, in Gledhill (2020).
19. As Pippin (2020: 288) puts it, “[d]espite all the controversy such an approach has always provoked, it has always seemed to me a simple enough ambition”.
20. This might be traced back to Amartya Sen's seminal Tanner Lecture, ‘Equality of What?’ (Sen 1979).
21. Pippin (2015: 734). See also Pinkard (2014).
22. See Winfield (1988).
23. Habermas (2011: 293). This is in the context of his reply to my analysis of the Rawls-Habermas debate in Gledhill (2011).
24. Habermas (1973: 1).
25. Ibid.
26. Habermas (1987a: 75–82).
27. Habermas (1973: 142–169).
28. Habermas (1973: 143).
29. Compare the relationship that Robert Brandom (2002: 1–17) remarks upon between *Making it Explicit* (Brandom 1994) and *Tales of the Mighty Dead* (Brandom 2002).
30. Habermas (1984: 374).
31. Habermas (1987a: 53).
32. Habermas (2003: 175–213).
33. Honneth (1991: 282), quoted in Finlayson (2009: 8).
34. Relevant here is the ambivalent meaning that can be read into Edgar's words in Shakespeare's *King Lear* (which form the epigraph to Pippin (1999)): “And worse I may be yet. The worst is not, So long as we can say, ‘This is the worst’”.
35. Habermas (1987a: 127).
36. Habermas (1987a: 119–120, 127–129).
37. Pippin (1997: 157–184, 1999: 75).
38. For an alternative but related exploration of this question, see Giladi (2020).
39. Habermas (1987a: 22).
40. Habermas (1995: 201).
41. Habermas (1987a: 346).
42. Brandom (2015: 37); see also Baynes (2002).
43. Habermas (1989: 149).
44. Habermas (1995: 1–21).
45. Habermas (2018).
46. Moeller (2012: x–xi).
47. Habermas (1996: xxxix).
48. Buchwalter (2002: 129).
49. Fine (2001: 20).
50. For further discussion, see Howard (1996).
51. Habermas (1996: 270).
52. Ibid., p. 66.
53. Specter (2010: 171).

54. Habermas (1996: 384).
55. Habermas (2011: 291, n16).
56. Ibid.
57. Habermas (1996: 101).
58. Honneth (2014: 5).
59. Honneth (2015: 206).
60. Honneth (2012: 48).
61. Here I am in agreement with Christopher Zurn: "Honneth's new argument for the broad claims of moral economism – that capitalist markets are inescapably structured by normative content and so cannot be considered norm-free spaces integrated purely functionally – is neither conceptual nor normative, but empirical. In particular, the burden is shouldered by an in-depth sociological and historical reconstruction of about two centuries of economic history, attending to diverse attempts to institutionalise suitable moral constraints and conditions so that markets fulfil their inherent normative principles" (Zurn 2016: 180). For an alternative view, which reads Honneth as presupposing a constructive conception of justice, see Claassen (2014).
62. EPR: 3.
63. Honneth (2017b: 133, n22).
64. Habermas (2003: 211).

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4 Second Nature and the Critique of Ideology in Hegel and the Frankfurt School

Cat Moir

The section on ethical life in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* provides an account of how individuals balance their desire for personal freedom with the exigencies of living in society. For Hegel, the family, civil society, and the state provide normative institutional frameworks for satisfying competing demands. Habit and custom are the mechanisms through which, according to Hegel, ethical social action is achieved. Habits and customs may vary according to time and place, but in any given context they nevertheless assume the character of a "second nature". Values and institutions, Hegel argued, appear as (purely) natural. Though, in fact, they are socially constituted and historically mediated. However, "second nature" also had a double meaning for Hegel. It refers not only to social structures themselves, but also to the way in which we are supposed to relate to that structure, namely unreflectively and automatically, *as if* naturally. Far from being a negative concept in Hegel's thought, second nature has both positive and negative dimensions. Though he conceded that a shape of life can ossify when subjects within it no longer relate critically to its norms and institutions, he nevertheless also believed that the process of habit and custom becoming second nature is to some degree necessary for individuals to pursue an ethical life freely.

Although the thinkers of the Frankfurt School shared Hegel's desire to pursue an ethical life in common with others, under the influence of Marx, they also believed that this could only be achieved by unmasking the constructed character of *apparently* natural – and often repressive – habits and customs. What Hegel called "second nature" was for many Frankfurt School thinkers simply "ideology", understood as those norms, values, and institutions that function to present a given shape of life as natural and necessary when in fact all shapes of life are historically contingent. The concept of ideology was key to the critical theory of society; its critique was one of the Frankfurt School's central methods. Without a deeper understanding of the relationship between the critical theory of ideology and Hegel's concept of second nature, we fail to appreciate the character, scope, and significance of Hegel's influence on the Frankfurt School. My chapter briefly reconstructs Hegel's concept

of second nature, before examining how it was taken up by Marx, then incorporated, via Lukács, by the first-generation Frankfurt School, particularly Adorno. By investigating how the idea of second nature influenced the tradition of ideology critique, I aim to enrich our understanding of Hegel's work, his impact on the Frankfurt School, and the concepts of second nature and ideology in the critical theory tradition more broadly.

I

Hegel's Concept of Second Nature

Hegel uses the concept of second nature most extensively in the section on ethical life in the *Philosophy of Right*. However, it is closely related to a number of other concepts – (first) nature, habit, and custom – which connect it back to (i) the section on subjective mind (anthropology) in the *Philosophy of Mind*; and to (ii) the discussion of the animal organism at the end of the *Philosophy of Nature*.¹ The concept of second nature is thus intimately connected to Hegel's understanding of human beings as belonging simultaneously to the realms of nature and spirit.

Commentators on Hegel, including those Frankfurt School figures discussed here, often draw a distinction between the “first” nature of the given environment and the “second” nature cultural sphere constructed by consciousness. In fact, however, from Hegel's perspective, so-called first nature understood as nature can only emerge once there is an embodied being capable of perceiving its environment as something outside of itself; in other words, first nature can only appear as external nature once the rudiments of consciousness are present. For Hegel, the first being to experience nature as standing outside itself is the animal organism, which Hegel considers to be the first true living subject because it has an experience of interiority and possesses a measure of autonomy vis-à-vis its environment. In PN §247, Hegel defines nature as “the Idea in the form of *otherness*”, whose “specific character” is constituted by “externality”. Only from the perspective of the animal organism as “a true, self-subsistent self which has attained to individuality”² can nature be perceived as an external realm.

By separating itself from “the universal substance of the earth”, the “external world which has not come under the domination of the self” becomes, “for the animal, a negative of itself, an indifferent existence”.³ As Hegel emphasises in PN §352: “[s]ince the animal organism is the process of subjectivity, of self-relation in an outer world, the rest of Nature is therefore here present for the first time as outward, since the animal preserves itself in this relation with the outer world”. Only with the animal organism, then, does “Nature” appear as an already existing (indifferent), external realm of necessary laws and material resistance (“not under

the domination of the self"). The internal or organic unity of the organism makes possible for the first time for an experience of externality, and what is external to the organism comes under the sign of nature – which is to say that so-called first nature is already second nature.

For Hegel, the human being, too, is an animal organism, albeit one with highly developed capacities for rational self-reflection. As Hegel puts it in his lectures on the philosophy of art:

Man is an animal, but even in his animal functions he does not remain within the in-itself as the animal does, but becomes conscious of the in-itself, recognises it, and raises it (for example, like the process of digestion) into self-conscious science. It is through these means that man dissolves the boundary of his immediate consciousness existing-in-itself, and thus precisely because he knows that he is an animal, he ceases to be an animal and gives himself the knowledge of himself as *Geist*.

(LFA: 80)

Human beings share with other animals the immediate perception of nature as external. However, whereas animals orient themselves in this external environment primarily instinctually for Hegel, human beings do so through a mechanism he calls "habit".

Eating, reproduction, habitat-building, and so on are all instinctive behaviours for the animal organism, which is to say that they are innate capacities that respond to bodily needs without having to be learned. For human beings, however, these activities have to be learned and internalised, along with the cultural significance that necessarily accrues to them, so that they become habitual, as if they were innate. In his discussion of anthropology, Hegel describes the apparently simple act of self-directed locomotion – walking – which he sees as instinctual in the animal organism, as a human habit in the specific sense that it must be willed and learned.⁴ "Habit", in the technical sense in which Hegel uses the term here, describes a broad process of training in which the human body *qua* animal organism is transformed into spirit.⁵ In other words, habits are repetitive actions by which one learns how to become a social being. Activities such as walking, talking, and eating must be practised repeatedly until they become automatic and *as if* natural and instinctual: in other words, until they become second nature.

Habituation, as Hegel describes it, involves internalising not only the physical motor aspects of these activities,⁶ but the various *norms that constitute them as cultural practices*.⁷ In human society, eating is rarely simply a matter of consuming food for purposes of survival: it is an activity governed by certain rules and expectations that vary from one context to another. The simple fact of having to eat might be instinctive, but the way in which human beings eat is determined by customs. Hegel's term

“custom” (*Sitte*) is to culture what habit is to an individual. Custom can thus be understood as a social habit extended across a particular shape of life. In any given context, certain shared practices exist that individuals have to learn and internalise to be able to operate within that shape of life. Just as the individual must internalise the practice of walking so that it becomes possible to do it automatically and “naturally”, so too must we internalise the particular customs that apply within the shape of life we occupy until they become second nature.

The concept of second nature in Hegel’s philosophy of objective mind thus appears under a dual aspect. On the one hand, as Hegel writes in EPR §4, second nature is synonymous with the “system of right”, the “kingdom of actualised freedom”, and the “world of spirit”. In this sense, then, second nature appears as something external to the individual: it is the network of practices, customs, and rules that we must internalise and conform to, in order to behave appropriately as members of a given society. Though for Hegel customs are contingent upon the particular shape of life in which they are formed, they nevertheless have an embodied existence in law, language, morality, the state, and so on, which makes them appear to us as external and law-like, almost in the manner of (first) nature.

As we have seen, however, second nature also has another, subjective aspect, referring not only to the realm of custom as a quasi-independent, external structure, but also to the way in which individuals are supposed to relate to that structure in the sphere of ethical life. As Hegel argues in EPR §151:

when individuals are simply identified with the actual order, ethical life (*das Sittliche*) appears as their general mode of conduct, i.e. as custom (*Sitte*), while the habitual practice of ethical living appears as a second nature which, put in the place of the initial, purely natural will, is the soul of custom permeating it through and through, the significance and the actuality of its existence.

What Hegel is arguing here is that it is a condition for behaving ethically in society that we internalise the rules of the “actual order” so that it becomes second nature to act in accordance with them. In this sense, then, the concept of second nature has a *positive* meaning for Hegel.

To understand why the concept of second nature has this positive valence, it is necessary to grasp Hegel’s conception of the state – the most complex and highly developed embodiment of ethical social life – as a kind of organism. Just as an animal organism is an internally unified whole that is more than the sum of its parts, so too the state is for Hegel an “organism”⁸ constantly in the process of its own self-constitution via its members and organs, which include both the diverse offices and powers of the state and, at the micro-level, individual members of society.

As Hegel makes clear in *PN*, the animal organism cannot function if its members and organs are not working in harmony with one another. In the animal organism, Hegel calls this state of affairs in which one part asserts itself over against the others “disease”. As Hegel argues in §371, the individual organism “finds itself in a state of *disease* when one of its systems or organs . . . establishes itself in isolation and persists in its particular activity against the activity of the whole, the fluidity and all-pervading process of which is thus obstructed”. Disease presents a problem for the organism *qua* organism because it jeopardises its internal integrity in such a way that reduces its autonomy and eventually threatens to erase its distinct, unified individual existence by causing death. This is not only a problem for the organism as a whole, however: because the organism’s organs and members depend for their existence on the healthy functioning of the organism as a whole, disease is also a problem for the individual organ or member.

If we understand the state as a kind of social body, as Hegel does, then we can see how, by analogy, the state’s proper functioning is impaired if any one of its constituent parts gains the upper hand over the others. We find this idea helpfully unpacked in §269A, which explains if one part of the state malfunctions, then the whole falls apart because the “nature of an organism is such that unless each of its parts is brought into identity with the others, unless each of them is prevented from achieving autonomy, the whole must perish”. The analogy with the animal organism is made explicit with reference to the “fable of the belly”, a tale supposedly told by Menenius Agrippa to persuade rebellious plebeians to return to Rome. In the fable, all the members of the body rebel against the belly, which they accuse of living off their labours, but the belly reminds them that the members live only through it. Just as disease damages the individual organism when one part malfunctions, so it is with the state. Second nature is thus the means by which the integrity of the state is maintained. When the values of a particular shape of life are cultivated in citizens until they become second nature, it prevents any one part of the body politic from asserting itself against the others.

Although Hegel does not make it explicit here, just as with the individual organism, it is not only the case that the whole – in this case, the state – is damaged if one part fails; because the well-being of each individual depends on the proper functioning of the state as a whole, the individual part or member is also damaged. Hence it is positive also from the point of view of the *individual* to internalise social norms and customs and act according to them as a second nature. As §268A reminds us, when we walk the streets at night in safety, we are typically not reflecting critically on the fact that our existence depends on the preservation of the state, which provides for law and order, because “habit blinds us to that on which our whole existence depends. . . . This habit of feeling safe has become second nature, and we do not reflect on just how this is

due solely to the working of special institutions". What is implied here is that to be constantly challenging the norms and customs that govern the social totality, or perpetually reflecting on their contingency, would not only create an unstable situation from the point of view of the state; it would cause individuals to exist in a permanent state of anxiety, which would be damaging also for them.

Another way of reading this, of course, is to say that second nature blinds us to the reality of the situation, and this interpretation will be taken up by Marx and the Frankfurt School. This criticism is dealt with in more detail later, but before moving on to the historical reception, it is worth emphasising that, although Hegel does see second nature as having the positive function outlined earlier, *he does not simply want us to behave unreflectively and uncritically towards the customs of our society*.⁹ Indeed, to do so would be to abdicate one's own reason, which is the faculty proper to *Geist*. Not only does Hegel stress that it is just as important to contest and criticise norms and customs as it is to internalise them; he argues that the capacity for critical (self-)reflection is itself one of the practices of ethical life that we must internalise so that it becomes second nature. This becomes clear in the discussion of education in EPR §151A:

Education . . . is the art of making human beings ethical: it considers them as natural beings and shows them how they can be reborn, and how their original nature can be transformed into a second, spiritual nature so that this spirituality becomes habitual to them. In habit, the opposition between the natural and the subjective will disappears, and the resistance of the subject is broken; to this extent, habit is part of ethics, just as it is part of philosophical thought, since the latter requires that the mind . . . should be trained to resist arbitrary fancies and that these should be destroyed and overcome to clear the way for rational thought.

Here we can observe a dialectical movement as the most immediate, "original" (one might say, instinctive) form of behaviour is transformed into reflective, intellectual behaviour as we are made aware of it through education. In turn, this conscious, self-reflexive form of behaviour must also be made not instinctive but habitual, which is to say automatic, unreflective, *as if* natural. In this way, the individual subject can become a properly functioning member of the social body constituted in the state.

Of course, in Hegel's time as today, neither political subjects nor agents of even the best functioning democracies always act in accordance with the principles on which modern states are founded. There are many ways to explain this – on Hegel's account, inadequate civic education might be one. Another is to say that the idea of the state as Hegel articulates it is just that: *an idea*, which not only fails to correspond with reality as

it is actually lived, but in our belief that the idea actually represents or expresses reality, *conceals the true nature of reality from us*. This is of course the path taken by Marx, to whom we will now turn.

II

Marx on Nature and Ideology

The question of Hegel's influence on Marx is one of the most complex and contested aspects of the reception history of both men's thought. Its nature and extent were not fully clear until the publication in the 1930s of Marx's early manuscripts, which demonstrated how his reception of Hegel changed shape over time as his own thinking developed. The concepts of (second) nature and ideology are central to tracing this story. The way in which Marx understood the human-nature relation on the one hand, and, on the other, philosophy's role in dissimulating material reality, changes as a function of the transformations that occur between the early economic and philosophical manuscripts of 1844 and the text that would become known as *The German Ideology*, and the later notes on political economy published as the *Grundrisse* Marx.¹⁰ By the time we get to *Capital*, Marx has largely left the theory of ideology behind, but the concept of (second) nature we find here is quite different from the one he describes in the 1840s.¹¹

Marx begins his intellectual journey, as is well known, as a Young Hegelian follower of Feuerbach. That is to say that he is interested in Hegel's dialectical theory of development through contradiction but is also influenced by Feuerbach's sensuous materialist critique of Hegelian idealism, with its anthropological, humanist perspective. Marx's materialism was based on a vision of human beings as rooted in nature. Like Hegel, Marx saw human beings as both belonging to nature in the same way as other animals, and yet transcending nature in particular ways. "*Man is directly a natural being*", he writes in the "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole" (MECW 3: 336), which is to say that we possess instincts, but also vital *powers*, and are therefore active, creative, yet at the same time corporeal, sensuous, and suffering, like other animals and plants.¹²

However, he goes on to say that man is "not merely a natural being: he is a *human* natural being, that is to say, he is a being for himself. Therefore, he is a *species-being*, and has to confirm and manifest himself as such both in his being and in his knowing". So, Marx accords with Hegel in seeing human beings as both natural and more-than-natural beings.¹³ However, the precise way in which Marx saw humans as more-than-natural differed from Hegel. Whereas Hegel located our specificity in terms of self-consciousness (as Marx partly also does here when he claims that the specificity of our species-being consists in manifesting

ourselves in our knowing), for Marx it is *labour*, our self-manifestation “in our being” that characterises the human species.

Marx begins to make this argument already in 1844 by claiming that “nature as it develops through industry, even though in an *estranged* form, is true anthropological nature”.¹⁴ Human history, Marx argues, is itself a “*real part of natural history*, of nature developing into man”. Although Marx does not explicitly use the term “second nature” here, it is clear that when he talks about the “estranged world of human objectification”, which includes “religion, wealth, etc.”, he is describing the creation of the spheres of not only objective mind, but also human history, as a second nature in the objective sense intended by Hegel.

Already here, there is a sense in which Marx sees the process of “estrangement” that goes on in the act of producing the sphere of objective mind as concealing the true nature of reality. Marx believes that because Hegel emphasises a transitivity between being and thought, he ascribes an existence in themselves to abstract entities, such as religion, wealth, and the state, and fails to see that these concepts have no existence without embodied human beings. In Hegel’s philosophy, Marx argues, the “*human character of nature and of the nature created by history* – man’s products – appears in the form that they are *products of abstract mind* and as such, therefore, phases of *mind – thought-entities*”,¹⁵ rather than products of human labour. Because, as embodied natural beings, we are used to experiencing whatever is outside of ourselves as fixed, given, and static, subject to “natural” laws, we also imagine that our own products, whether they be the products of our mind such as religion, philosophy, morality, and law, or of our hands such as buildings and objects, are self-subsistent and “natural”.

Although Marx recognises that Hegel’s dialectical method partly works against such a conception, he also believes that *because it deals primarily in the realm of concepts and universals, it conceals the physically, historically constructed character of the “natural” world in which we live*. When Marx speaks of the “human character of nature and of nature created by history” here, he is acknowledging that even what goes by the name of first nature – landscape, atmosphere, etc. – is not simply given but is already produced. As we have seen, Hegel thinks this too, but he sees this first construction of nature by the animal organism as an act of mind rather than of metabolic labour or industry in Marx’s sense.

The problem that then arises for Hegel, according to Marx, is that he mistakes the resolution of a problem in thought for its real resolution. Thus, as Marx puts it, “private property *as a concept* is transcended in the *concept of morality*” in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, but “because thought imagines itself to be directly the other of itself . . . and therefore takes its own action for *sensuous, real* action, this superseding in thought, which leaves its object in existence in the real world, believes that it has really overcome it”.¹⁶ As Marx already argued in his Introduction to the

Contribution to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law, there is only one means in the real world of solving the problems identified by Hegel:¹⁷ *practice*, which Marx identifies with *class struggle*.

These ideas are crystallising by the time Marx and Engels write the manuscripts that will be published as *The German Ideology* in spring 1846. There, we find this statement:

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their material life.

(MECW 5: 31)

This formulation is significant for understanding the way in which Marx takes over Hegel's concept of second nature and connects it to his theory of ideology. To treat the second term first, Marx's claim here implies that the way in which labour is organised in a particular society affects everything that is produced in that society, including its customs and ideas. The "material life" that humans produce in this way reflects or embodies the interests of those who dominate in the division of labour. Their ideas become the ruling ideas, or ideology, which also serve to present the order in which they rule as natural and necessary. As Marx writes:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations grasped as ideas; hence of the relations which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.

(MECW 5: 59)

Crucially, for Marx, the ruling ideas have the character of an "eternal law" (*ibid.*), which is to say that they make a contingent, transient situation appear natural and necessary to maintain the *status quo*. Hegel's problem, according to Marx, was that he failed to see how the ideas that dominate in a particular historical context do so because they are the ideas that justify the rule of the ruling class. This ideological obfuscation makes it possible, Marx claims, to see history merely as a process of

conflict between different *ideas* about how to live, rather than between individuals and groups with diverging social interests.

At this point, we can see how Marx has transformed Hegel's concept of second nature, which had both positive and negative valences, into a rather negative vision of ideology. For Hegel, it was necessary to internalise the dominant customs and ideas of our society to a certain extent, lest we as individuals suffer from being constantly at odds with our environment and the social whole thus becomes fragmented. For Marx, precisely those norms and customs serve to perpetuate suffering by masking the causes of inequality. Marx believed that by taking practical action to transform society, human beings can also thereby transform the customs and values that obtain in the social sphere.

In the 1850s, however, Marx's earlier account of humanity's embeddedness in nature is beginning to change. He distinguishes increasingly sharply between human beings and other animals and begins to outline a distinction between pre-capitalist forms of social organisation as more "natural" than industrial, technologised capitalism. By the time we reach the *Grundrisse*, Marx's premise is that the reign of capital actually depends on a severance from nature. Pre-capitalist property forms depend on community relations that are *naturwüchsig* [naturally grown] (cf. MECW 28: 399–439). However, the wage-labour-capital relation, Marx argues, depends on releasing the worker from the soil as his *natural workshop*. If subsistence nature is the "inorganic" nature of humans, wage labour is the product of *history*. In other words, Marx begins to conceptualise the emergence of capitalist modernity as entailing an ontological separation from nature. For pre-capitalist property means belonging to a community, and by means of the relationship to this community, belonging to the land and soil, to the earth as the individual's organic property. The emergence of capital as moveable property rests upon the transcendence of another form of property.¹⁸

This view continues to dominate in *Capital* 1 as the problem of primitive accumulation. The primitive accumulation of capital is achieved, Marx argues, through violence against peasants and the natural environment. Second nature is formed here as capitalist nature, via the profusion of commodity relations and the phenomenon of commodity fetishism, which conceals the worker's own natural powers by anthropomorphising the products of her labour. Marx sees the greatest achievement of capitalist culture as the naturalisation of capitalist relations through ideology and commodity fetishism. Thus, he concludes that the "advance of capitalist production develops a working class which by education, tradition, habit, looks upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of Nature" (MECW 35: 726). The Marx of *Capital*, then, is concerned to show how the objective realm of second nature we produce through labour appears natural as a result of the distorting forces of ideology (which itself belongs to this sphere) and fetishism.

Like Hegel, Marx believes that we cannot but internalise the dominant ideas of the society in which we live until acting in accordance with them becomes a second nature; however, he does not understand this as a positive process. Rather than enabling us to act freely while respecting the freedom of the other, for Marx, second nature *qua* ideology prevents us from becoming truly free because it keeps us in thrall to capital.¹⁹

In summary, Marx's early thinking, according to which human beings are deeply embedded in nature, lays the groundwork for his theory of ideology as that form of thinking that imagines the "second nature" we create is merely given. This upside-down worldview is what Marx calls "ideology" because it serves, however unconsciously, to prevent those who do not benefit from the *status quo* from seeing where their real interests lie. *It makes what is actually a contingent, historically produced situation appear natural, necessary, and eternal.*

Over time, Marx's view of human beings as fundamentally embedded in nature shifts somewhat, however, in ways that are important for understanding the subsequent reception of the concept of second nature. As Marx's critique of political economy gathers pace, his earlier, more naturalistic view gives way to an understanding of the world of capitalist social relations as a superstructural second nature that appears in many ways more real and immutable than "natural" laws themselves – largely because industrial progress has been achieved by transforming the natural world to an extraordinary degree.

Though Marx rarely explicitly uses the term "second nature" to describe this state of affairs, the connection between the Hegelian concept and his own theory is clear. The world of fetishised commodity production increasingly appears to *be* the world as it naturally and necessarily exists, and the ruling ideas of capitalist society – its ideology – function to uphold this impression. The only ways to overcome this situation for Marx are revolutionary political action, which, it is implied, will make the need for ideology redundant, and the demystification of ideology as such, in other words the practice of ideology critique which will become one of the primary critical tools of Western Marxism and the early Frankfurt School.

III

Lukács: Second Nature and Reification

Although Lukács took part in the first Marxist work week in 1922, which led to the foundation of the Frankfurt School, he was never an official member of the Institute for Social Research. Indeed, the controversy that erupted around Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*, in which the party forced Lukács to repudiate his book, demonstrated the need for the institute to maintain independence from the official Marxist position.

Nevertheless, Lukács's influence on the thought of the early Frankfurt School was considerable.²⁰ His insistence on Marxism as a philosophy of *praxis*, on Marx's debt to Hegel, as well as his own theoretical innovations, particularly the concept of reification, all marked the first generation of Frankfurt School thinkers indelibly. The concept of second nature is exemplary here since it connects these various facets both in Lukács's thought and in his subsequent impact on critical theory.

Lukács first deploys the concept of second nature in his *Theory of the Novel*. Though this work supposedly belongs to Lukács's pre-Marxist period, as he tells us in his preface to the second edition of *History and Class Consciousness*,²¹ Lukács had already read *Capital* at this point in his preparation for a sociological study of drama, though he also claims that it was primarily Marx the sociologist that interested him then, under the influence of his own teachers, Weber and Simmel. Nevertheless, during the First World War, Lukács claims to have resumed his studies of Marx, this time "under the influence of Hegel rather than any contemporary thinkers" – Hegel, whose effect on his own thinking Lukács also describes as "highly ambiguous".²²

The Theory of the Novel, while ostensibly a work of pre-Marxist aesthetics, is nevertheless founded on what Anna Bostock, Lukács's translator, describes as the "hope that a natural life worthy of man can spring from the disintegration of capitalism and the destruction, seen as identical with that disintegration, of the lifeless and life-denying social and economic categories".²³ Lukács was motivated here by Simmel and Weber, and their particular generation of philosophers of cultural life. Against a dominant, scientistic tendency within philosophy to treat all areas of human life as if they were objects of the natural sciences, Simmel and Weber argued that while nature operated according to nomothetic laws, culture was a sphere of values. Though not themselves Marxists, these figures did criticise capitalist modernity for the way in which they believed it led to the alienation of human beings. They diagnosed the sclerosis of modern culture as a result of the increasing rationalisation of all spheres of life along economic and natural scientific lines.

Under the influence of these ideas, in *The Theory of the Novel*, Lukács characterises the realm of culture, custom, and value as a "second nature" in which human beings feel trapped because we do not recognise it as the product of the creative activity of human subjects. When Lukács argues along these lines that "[e]strangement from nature (the first nature), the modern sentimental attitude to nature, is only a projection of man's experience of his self-made environment as a prison instead of as a parental home",²⁴ one can hear the influence of Marx's claim in the *Theses on Feuerbach*,²⁵ that the object world is the product of "*sensuous human activity, practice*", of the labour of those that came before us.²⁶

Lukács uses the concept of second nature in *The Theory of the Novel* to describe how the novel as a literary form reflects the cultural

superstructure of the modern society that produced it. The world of the nineteenth-century novel for Lukács is a world “entirely dominated by convention, the full realisation of the concept of a “second nature”, which he describes as “a quintessence of meaningless laws in which no relation to the soul can be found”.²⁷ Lukács’s materialist theory of culture here means that not only the world of the novel has this second-nature character; rather, the fact that the novel as form is preoccupied with the world of convention is indicative of the fact that the culture of the society that has produced it has also become merely conventional. Lukács contrasts the novel here with lyric poetry as a form still capable of expressing the connection between the soul and man’s true, creative nature because it connects us with the archaic act of creation and, in so doing, reveals the factual transience of second (and indeed first) nature.

The novel, Lukács argues, is a transformation of the epic form in an age in which “the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem”.²⁸ The second nature its protagonists encounter is not “dumb, sensuous and yet senseless like the first”, but is rather a complex of crystallised, encrypted “meanings” that has become “rigid and strange”, and which, crucially “no longer awakens interiority”.²⁹ For the early Lukács, the only possibility of reanimating this ossified second nature, of decoding the meanings, is the resurrection of the subjects whose product it originally is, though this remains, Lukács acknowledges, a thoroughly speculative proposition (whereas for Benjamin it becomes a historical demand).

In his residual commitment to a romantic unity between human beings and the natural world, there is a parallel between Lukács’ early thinking and that of the early Marx. However, this must in no small measure be coincidental given that little of Marx’s early work was available to Lukács at this time. And indeed, even in Lukács’ early formulation of the concept of second nature, we can detect the trace of him reading Hegel primarily through the late Marx in three main ways.

First, second nature as it appears here is overwhelmingly an objective structure for Lukács: even if it is subjectively produced, the subject is at least initially unaware that it is so, and there is no sense in which second nature here denotes a mode of relation on the part of the subject to the object world. Second, the concept also has the predominantly negative association of dissimulating the process of its own genesis. As Lukács writes, second nature, like “first” nature itself, is “determinable only as the embodiment of recognised but senseless necessities and therefore it is incomprehensible, unknowable in its real substance”.³⁰ Here, we find the origins of Lukács’s important distinction between *the realm of nature* as an in-itself meaningless sphere properly understood via scientific rationality, and *human society*, which is inherently meaning-laden and is properly known through interpretative, dialectical methods.

Finally, we can see here how already for the early Lukács as for the late Marx, there is an element of inescapability bound up with the idea of second nature. Though it remains ambiguous in *The Theory of the Novel* as to whether Lukács sees the non-literary subject as capable of seeing through and thus potentially escaping the “prison” of second nature, certainly the literary subject is incapable of doing so. Moreover, his claim that the second nature of both the novel and the society that produces it “no longer awakens interiority” suggests a sense here in which – arguably as a paradoxical result of our insight into the mutual imbrication of humanity and nature – second nature, for Lukács, becomes a kind of reality from which the subject no longer experiences itself as fundamentally differentiated, *seeing itself as an object among objects*. Given that the experience of interiority is the transcendental condition for self-reflection, we can already see how the vision Lukács is beginning to sketch here involves neutralising the possibility for critique.

These ideas are further refined, though not fundamentally transformed, in *History and Class Consciousness*. Now a committed Marxist and communist, the Lukács of *History and Class Consciousness* was also grappling with the implications of two significant historical events for rethinking Marxist theory and communist practice: the failures of both the German November Revolution and the Hungarian Soviet Republic in which he had been directly involved. Here were two cases in which practice had failed to bring about lasting social change. In search of an answer, Lukács turned to questions of false consciousness and ideology as key factors in dissimulating universal class interests.

Though, by this time, Lukács has at least rhetorically abandoned some of his earlier commitments,³¹ the concept of reification that he develops in *History and Class Consciousness* does offer a partial explanation for why scientific rationality was increasingly invading all spheres of life. Reification literally means “to turn into a thing”, and on Lukács’s account, the dominant form of commodity production in capitalist society meant that human social relations – the labour relations that produce commodities – were increasingly perceived as relations between things (a point already made by Marx, of course). As labouring inputs into the production process, human beings are treated as things, devoid of interiority, subject to laws, like the objects of first nature. Of course, such a treatment of human beings is necessarily both oppressive and obscurantist since we remain suffering beings with complex inner lives. Nevertheless, because living labour is treated as a commodity under capitalism, the natural scientific way of understanding the world, which, according to Lukács, is valid when applied to first nature, also becomes the dominant, though invalid, way of understanding the social world of second, humanly constructed nature.³² In other words, Lukács’s concept of reification describes the process by which the ideology of capitalism, its narrative of itself as a natural, necessary, and eternal state of affairs, comes into being.

Lukács was fascinated by the mysterious quasi-objectivity that social relations seemed to assume under capitalism. It was as if, through the alienation of commodities from their producers and their subsequent, seemingly independent circulation in society, bourgeois social relations became a sort of “second nature.” As Lukács wrote:

[M]en are constantly smashing, replacing, and leaving behind the “natural,” irrational, and actually existing bonds, while, on the other hand, they erect around themselves in the reality that they have created and “made,” a kind of second nature which evolves with exactly the same inexorable necessity as was the case earlier with irrational forces of nature (more exactly: the social relations which appear in this form).

(Lukács 1971b: 128)

Here again we see how, for Lukács, the concept of second nature is primarily objective, negative because alienating, oppressing, mystifying, and inescapable – all features that bear the trace of the late Marx.

There is a further indication of the later Marx’s influence on Lukács here, too. Just as the Marx of *Capital* sees humanity becoming further alienated from (first) nature with the development of capitalist social relations, so too did Lukács see human beings increasingly alienated from first nature the more we become entangled in self-created “second nature”. The seeming immediacy of nature enjoyed in previous societies, where the wood used to build houses came from the nearby forest, the meat eaten came from animals raised and slaughtered or hunted directly by people themselves, became increasingly rare. *Instead, what humanity now encountered was a system of commodities, goods imported from every corner of the globe, serially processed through a complex division of labour before arriving to their consumer in their finished forms.*³³ In this process, “second nature” becomes the world to which humanity is immediately accustomed, with which we are more familiar, such that first nature seemed increasingly remote and strange.

Lukács’s theory of second nature as he develops it both in *The Theory of the Novel* and *History and Class Consciousness* will become highly influential for the thought of the Frankfurt School, but, as I have argued, he develops his theory on the basis of a reading of Hegel focused primarily through the thought of the later Marx, who saw the progress of capitalist modernity as bound up with an increasing alienation from “first” nature as the sphere of second nature became more complex and self-justifying (through ideology). By the time the first generation of Frankfurt School and adjacent thinkers take up the discussion of second nature in the 1930s, Marx’s earlier manuscripts, in which he is closer to Hegel in emphasising continuity and human mediation between first and second nature, were available and had begun to influence the development of

critical theory. As the following section will demonstrate, this new orientation on the early Marx would have a significant impact on the way in which second nature and its relation to ideology critique were thematised by the early Frankfurt School and related Critical Theorists.

IV

The Frankfurt School: Second Nature and Ideology Critique

Lukács had a significant influence on the thought of the early Frankfurt School, where his reading of the concept of second nature was highly influential. It was taken up by Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse,³⁴ and Fromm. It also greatly influenced the work of critical social theorists in the Frankfurt School orbit, particularly Benjamin, as well as Siegfried Kracauer and Alfred Sohn-Rethel. For reasons of focus, here I take Adorno (together with Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*) as the key representative of the first-generation Frankfurt School proper.³⁵

Adorno's early engagement with the concept of second nature is closer to the early Marx than Lukács's account in that it emphasises a strong continuity between the realms of nature and history.³⁶ For Adorno as for Lukács, ideology critique consists in something like revealing the apparently immediate world of second nature to be a (inter-)subjective construct: he goes further, however, in showing, as Hegel already (implicitly) did, that "first nature" is also a myth. Initially, Adorno reads second nature along Marxian and Lukácsian – rather than strictly speaking Hegelian – lines, as primarily objective and fulfilling a broadly oppressive function. Later, however, in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and especially in his post-1945 writings, we can observe Adorno extracting a more positive reading of second nature, which priorities the need to internalise the capacity for critical thought, especially through aesthetic education, in order to avoid a repeat of the Holocaust. This brings him into a closer, though still critical, relationship to Hegel.

Adorno first seriously takes up the concept of second nature in his 1932 lecture on "The Idea of a Natural-History" in which he attempts to "dialectically overcome the usual antithesis of nature and history".³⁷ Adorno's ideology-critical objective here is already apparent from his association of the conventional concept of nature with that of myth defined as "what has always been, what as fatefully arranged predetermined being underlies history and appears in history".³⁸ In contrast, history, as Adorno defines it, is "characterised primarily by the occurrence of the qualitatively new",³⁹ which is implicitly identified with what is socially constituted and historically mediated. With the concept of natural history, Adorno thus aims to demonstrate both the historicity of nature and reveal as false the apparent naturalness of second nature understood as the objective forms in which subjectively produced historical

phenomena are transmitted from the past. The idea of natural history explicitly draws, as Adorno tells us, on the theory of second nature as developed by Lukács and Benjamin.⁴⁰

Adorno follows Lukács in conceptualising second nature primarily in objective terms: it is the “alienated world [of] things created by man”.⁴¹ There is some confusion, however, over the extent to which Lukács sees “first” or “second” nature as the *more* alienated condition. Initially, Adorno claims that “first” nature for Lukács is the world of meaning and immediacy, and “second” nature that of meaningless, alienated convention. Later, however, he argues that first nature for Lukács is “like-wise alienated nature, nature in the sense of the natural sciences”.⁴² As we have seen, from his early work onwards Lukács saw the logic of the natural sciences as at odds with the sphere of human culture and history.

By the time we get to *History and Class Consciousness*, it is clear that for Lukács, the realm of first nature is in itself meaningless, which is precisely what makes it suitable for natural scientific study and inappropriate for the application of dialectics, which should be reserved for the meaning-laden realms of history and society. Nevertheless, Lukács does also argue – implicitly in *The Theory of the Novel*, and more explicitly in *History and Class Consciousness* – that the growth of second nature involves an increasing alienation from a first nature experienced as meaningful. The question thus arises as to how, from Adorno’s perspective, “first” nature can refer both to the world of meaning and immediacy, and to the alienated nature of the natural sciences. This is a problem that Lukács presents and Adorno sets out to resolve. The crucial insight comes via Hegel, and though it can be detected in the natural history essay, it is more fully worked out, with Horkheimer, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

We recall that in Hegel’s philosophy of nature, it is only from the perspective of the animal organism that nature first appears as an external realm of necessity and objectivity. This first nature, then, is a construct in the sense that it is produced by an act of (a rudimentary) embodied mind. Adorno captures this idea in the natural history essay when he claims that “[s]econd nature is, in truth, first nature”, which is to say that both are “produced by the subject/object dialectic”.⁴³ The very idea of first nature is therefore a myth in Adorno’s sense, in which “myth” refers to that which is given and eternal as it is supposed to unfold in history. As the earliest form of human knowledge, myth presents a world in which we are immediately embedded in a fixed and eternal natural order imbued with meaning. It is thus a world of consciousness prior to alienation.

However, because consciousness initially experiences nature as an external realm of contingency and necessity beyond its control, it also imbues us with fear and constrains our capacity for autonomous action. The work of enlightenment, as Adorno and Horkheimer argue, is supposedly to free us from this situation *by gaining control over nature through*

natural science. Yet science – problematically if effectively – relies on a conception of subjectivity as something external to its natural object. According to Adorno, this erroneous self-erasure of the subject is what produces the alienated image of first nature we encounter in modern natural science. Natural science behaves as if the knowledge it acquires is *merely* objective and not also the product of an originary, creative act of embodied mind. This is the meaning of the paradigmatic claim in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that “[m]yth is already enlightenment and enlightenment reverts to mythology”.⁴⁴ Myth grasps our embeddedness in nature but in doing so transfigures our autonomy.

The freedom enlightenment affords from the negative consequences of said embeddedness is, however, achieved *via* our increasing domination of and alienation from nature, processes that elicit the return of repressed natural drives in the form of fascism (and, one might argue today, ecological collapse), and lock us into second nature in more intransigent patterns of path dependency than anything found in non-technological, organic nature. This idea returns more forcefully still in *Negative Dialectics*, where Adorno claims there is “a universal feeling, a universal fear, that our progress in controlling nature may increasingly help to weave the very calamity it is supposed to protect us from, that it may be weaving that second nature into which society has rankly grown”.⁴⁵

First nature is thus mythic for Adorno in the sense that we misrecognise it as fixed and eternal, when in fact it is a transient realm in which subjectivity and consciousness have themselves arisen historically. In the 1932 essay, Adorno draws on Benjamin to make this point, who, he claims, shows in his *Origin of German Tragic Drama* that “[n]ature itself is transitory” and therefore “includes the element of history”.⁴⁶ Adorno continues:

Whenever an historical element appears it refers back to the natural element that passes away within it. Likewise the reverse: whenever “second nature” appears, when the world of convention approaches, it can be deciphered in that its meaning is shown to be precisely its transience.⁴⁷

What Adorno here calls “historical elements” are qualitatively new phenomena in the sense that they have been created by human beings out of “natural elements” (though that is not to say unmodified by human activity) that cease to be simply natural once they are incorporated as raw material into the historical artefact. The “second nature” thus constructed, however, bears the mark of transience, and its decryption unmasks the myth of its givenness.

When Adorno ends the essay by saying that these insights are “only an interpretation of certain fundamental elements of the materialist dialectic”,⁴⁸ his connection to Marx and to the project of an emancipatory

politics is clear. Indeed, Adorno sees the decryption of historical ciphers – in other words, cultural criticism – as central to this project. It is with Benjamin, however, rather than Lukács, that Adorno identifies the more compelling account of how aesthetic criticism can help to liberate us from ideology.

As we have seen, Lukács speculates that the only way to truly reanimate the ossified world of capitalist convention is to resurrect the subjects whose product it is.⁴⁹ For Adorno, this remains a theological demand in the early Lukács; he credits Benjamin with overcoming this perspective by construing this resurrection not as a divine act, but as the result of a critical engagement with the realm of second nature *qua* art and technology.

In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin (1998) achieves this via the technique of allegorical criticism. Benjamin's concept of allegory refers to motifs that express the meaning of what they represent, rather than being attached to referents as arbitrary symbols. Benjamin focuses in the *Origin* on Baroque art and literature, which emphasised the transience of life at a historical moment in which the feudal order was giving way to modern capitalism. The Baroque was replete with motifs that encapsulate the mutually constitutive transience of nature and human history: skulls are a reminder of the certainty of death, rotten fruit of natural decay, and natural phenomena such as bubbles and smoke, but also man-made objects such as watches, hourglasses, and musical instruments represent the brevity of life. As Adorno writes in the natural history essay, the "theme of the allegorical", for Benjamin, "is, simply, history".⁵⁰ *Via* the analysis of allegory, Benjamin aims to reveal the "interweaving of historical and natural being [such that the meaning of 'nature' appears as] "transience".⁵¹ Though Benjamin hardly makes it explicit in the *Origin*, the emancipatory potential of this gesture is already given in contours that he will develop later. Indeed, in the second version of the work of art essay⁵² and the theses on the concept of history, Benjamin will come close to arguing for the material realisation of Lukács's still-theological resurrection of the dead *via* the deployment of an emancipatory "second technology" freed from the constraints of capitalist profit-seeking.⁵³

Benjamin was always more optimistic about the revolutionary potential inherent in second nature. He believed that the creation and analysis of art, media, and technological forms can train us to think critically about the "nature" of the world around us and the part we play in constructing it – and therefore the part we might play in changing it. If this idea is clearly of Marxian inspiration, it nevertheless also recaptures the more positive, subjective dimensions of Hegel's concept of second nature. We recall that for Hegel, ethical life is made possible when, through education, individuals learn to reflect critically on their shape of life as if it were second nature to do so. Benjamin is arguing that it is *via* – to adapt Schiller's phrase – the aesthetic education of mankind that critical thinking can become second nature.

Already in the culture industry essay, Adorno and Horkheimer cast doubt on the capacity for modern culture and cultural criticism to help free us from our ideological illusions. And in his own post-1945 work, it often seems as if Adorno sees second nature in increasingly negative, objective, and impenetrable terms. As he argues in the essay *Wozu noch Philosophie?*, “[t]he more reified the world becomes, the thicker the veil cast upon nature, the more the thinking weaving that veil in its turn claims ideologically to be nature, primordial experience”.⁵⁴ After 1945, the primary motivation behind the critical theory of society, for Adorno, is no longer the revolutionary emancipation of the proletariat, but rather the categorical imperative “that Auschwitz not happen again”.⁵⁵

Now Adorno seeks an explanation for the rise of fascism in Hegelian identity thinking, which – on his reading – encourages us to see the historically singular as merely an instance of a universal type. On this account of Hegel’s philosophy, history is guided by the necessary activity of a universal “world spirit” at work within it, an idea that Adorno sees as restoring nature as the original myth of history. “Spirit”, as he writes in *Negative Dialectics*, “as a second nature is the negation of the spirit. . . , and that the more thoroughly the blinder its self-consciousness is to its natural growth”.⁵⁶ Hegel’s “world spirit” thus becomes “the ideology of natural history”, the idea that history itself proceeds according to natural laws rather than being the aggregate of contingent conditions and actions.

Elsewhere, however, Adorno reads Hegel more positively. He argues that Hegel “already gave a critical tinge” to a theory of second nature “not lost to a negative dialectics [which] assumes, *tel quel* the abrupt immediacy, the formations which society and its evolution present to our thought[, so that] analysis may bare its mediations to the extent of the immanent difference between phenomena and that which they claim to be in themselves”.⁵⁷ In other words, negative dialectics, the work of critical thought, must engage with second nature – the world of culture, commodities, and technology – *as* our immediate world in order to *reveal their ideological form and content*. As Adorno argues, after Auschwitz, the “only education that has any sense at all is an education toward critical self-reflection [both in early childhood and throughout life] as a general enlightenment”.⁵⁸

Although he hesitated to formulate *programmatically* what such an education should look like, it clearly involves two things for Adorno: the internalisation of the principles and practices of democracy so that they might be “naturalised” along Hegelian lines, that is, made habitual and automatic, *as if* natural; and the strengthening of subjective autonomy, which he sees best achieved by engaging with art. Unlike Lukács, however, whose vision of aesthetic education was founded on the idea that socially engaged art should use realist aesthetics to articulate an unequivocal political message, for Adorno, “[t]hose products are socially mute that do their duty by regurgitating *tel quel* whatever social material they

treat and count this metabolic exchange with second nature as the glory of art as social reflection”.⁵⁹ For Adorno, only by engaging with complex, ambiguous works that open themselves up to the democratic space of multiple interpretations can we as subjects learn and internalise critical thought so that it becomes our second nature.

Hegel’s concept of second nature encompassed both objective and subjective elements and had both negative and positive functions. It referred to both the world of objective spirit as it confronts us in its apparent naturalness within a particular shape of life, and to the unreflective, automatic mode of relating to that world, which Hegel believed we must adopt to function adequately as a member of society and for society as a whole to function well. Insofar as the needs of particular individuals will always tend to conflict at points with the norms and customs of a particular shape of life, and insofar as shapes of life appear natural because they pre-exist in any individual subject, *Hegel understands second nature as having a potentially oppressive character, both in its externality and in the inevitability of our having to relate to dominant norms*. However, to the extent that we are able to learn and internalise critical thinking as a kind of custom in its own right, and perform reasoned critique itself as if it were second nature, Hegel believes that second nature fulfils a positive function in the ethical life of the rational state.

In its transformation via Marx and Lukács, the concept of second nature is primarily perceived in its objective aspect as a realm of alienated life that conceals its true, constructed nature via the operation of ideology. Among the thinkers of the Frankfurt School, particularly Adorno, second nature retains this sense of an ideological space, but something of the positive, subjective potential intimated by Hegel is also retrieved. Through the work of ideology criticism, which is performed on the products of second nature *qua* culture, we can internalise the capacity for critical thought required for the proper functioning of ethical life, until it, too, becomes second nature to us.

Notes

1. Abbreviations: *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*: EPR; *Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature*: PN; *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind*: PM; *Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*: LFA. I will cite paragraph numbers from Hegel’s works here, to facilitate cross-referencing with different editions.
2. EPR: §351A.
3. Ibid.
4. Namely PM: §396A.
5. Cf. Lumsden (2016: 79).
6. For further on this, see Forman (2010).
7. For further on this, see Testa (2009).
8. Namely EPR: §269.
9. See Novakovic (2017) for the fullest available account of the relationship between second nature, reflection, and critique in Hegel’s work.

10. Terrell Carver and Daniel Blank have shown, on the basis of a philological reconstruction of the manuscript material, that *The German Ideology* was essentially an editorial fabrication of disparate texts whose publication as a work in its own right had an ideological function. For the first-generation Frankfurt School, however, *The German Ideology* was one of Marx and Engels's key early texts and it is therefore considered here as it appeared to them. Cf. Carver and Blank (2014a, 2014b).
11. Hereinafter, I will cite the volume and page number of the English edition of the *Marx-Engels Collected Works* in the format MECW [volume no.]: [page no.].
12. For further on this, see Foster (2000).
13. Indeed, in the lectures on aesthetics, Hegel anticipates Marx's argument that the opposition between the human as a natural and a spiritual being is a product of spirit itself. It is, Hegel argues, "[s]piritual culture, the modern intellect" that "produces this opposition in man which makes him an amphibious animal, because he now has to live in two worlds which contradict one another" (LFA: 54). Already here, Hegel understands the effect of this (culturally produced) diremption of man into a natural and a spiritual being as having an alienating effect. Its result is that "consciousness wanders about in this contradiction, and . . . cannot find satisfaction for itself in either the one or the other".
14. MECW 3: 303.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 332.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 341.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
18. Cf. Beilharz (2003: 29–30).
19. Although this is a particular problem for those who are most exploited, Marx sees it as a systemic problem that binds capitalists or property owners as much as it does workers. Hence why he believes that overcoming capitalist relations of production will free all in capitalist society, not only the proletariat.
20. Cf. Feenberg (2014).
21. Namely Lukács (1971a: ix).
22. Lukács (1971a: ix).
23. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
25. MECW 5: 3.
26. Indeed, one can find an anticipation in Lukács here of Walter Benjamin's (2003: 389–400) later thinking, which will insist on the revolutionary potential of grasping conditions transmitted from the past in embodied, inter-generational terms, as the product of the alienated labour of our ancestors, oppressed subjects like us.
27. Lukács (1971a: 113).
28. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
31. Concerning, for instance, the impulse to explain processes of cultural degeneration.
32. Even if Lukács does not make this point explicitly, it follows from his argument, *contra* Engels, that the application of dialectical laws of history and society to nature is invalid.
33. Cf. Lukács (1971b: 19).
34. For further on Marcuse here, see Noonan (2008).
35. Not only did Adorno treat the concept more extensively than his contemporaries at the Institute for Social Research, Marcuse and Fromm (and indeed

- Horkheimer, considered individually), but their uses of it relied much more heavily on a reading of Freud than did Adorno's. Habermas's later reception of the concept, meanwhile, shifts the concept much more in the direction of (ideology-critical) discourse analysis.
36. For further on this, see Becker (2018), Menke (2013), Pensky (2004), Shoop (2016), Stone (2006), and Whyman (2016).
 37. Adorno (1984: 111).
 38. Ibid. For further on this topic, see Nelson (2011).
 39. Ibid.
 40. Ibid., p. 117.
 41. Ibid.
 42. Ibid., p. 118.
 43. Ibid., p. 124.
 44. Adorno and Horkheimer (2002: xviii).
 45. Adorno (1973: 67).
 46. Adorno (1984: 120).
 47. Ibid.
 48. Ibid., p. 124.
 49. This later becomes the motive for Lukács's advocacy for realist aesthetics: only by depicting historical exploitation "accurately" can we foster the correct communist attitude. Cf. Adorno et al. (2018).
 50. Adorno (1984: 119).
 51. Ibid., p. 121.
 52. Benjamin (2008).
 53. For further on this, see Feher (1985).
 54. Adorno (2005: 7).
 55. Adorno (2003: 19).
 56. Adorno (1973: 356).
 57. Ibid., p. 38.
 58. Adorno (2003: 22).
 59. Adorno (2013: 314).

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Part III

Logic and Emancipatory Power

5 Hegel's Metaphysics and Social Philosophy

Two Readings

Charlotte Baumann

Since thinkers from Marx to Popper have criticised Hegel's metaphysics for its supposedly authoritarian implications, it is only natural that the late 20th century Anglo-American efforts to rehabilitate Hegel's philosophy were predicated on either downplaying or disregarding Hegel's metaphysical doctrines. Robert Pippin (2008), Terry Pinkard (1994), Robert Brandom (2019), John McDowell (2009), Axel Honneth (2000), and others have respectively developed different Kant-inspired, historicist and pragmatist readings of Hegel, all of which have been grouped as "non-metaphysical" Hegelianism. More recently, however, not only is there growing interest in Hegel's metaphysics,¹ but even the so-called non-metaphysical Hegelians have started explicitly discussing Hegel's metaphysical commitments, with Pippin (2019) publishing a book-length study on the subject.

This latest development revives an old question: *what are the social-philosophical implications of Hegel's metaphysics?* While others have posed this question,² my approach in this chapter is unique insofar as I contrast the former non-metaphysical reading with a traditional way of interpreting Hegel's metaphysics and social philosophy, whose lineage includes not Wittgenstein, Sellars, or Brandom, but rather Schelling, Marx, and Adorno.³ I will engage with the former non-metaphysical view exclusively in terms of Pippin's work. Pippin's interpretation is particularly interesting, as it shares a minimal commitment with a more traditional metaphysical reading: Pippin has always insisted that, for Hegel, not everything is historical and changing. Pippin's Hegel proposes a metaphysics in the sense of basic, ahistorical notions that enable any intelligible claims, "the distinctions and relations without which sense would not be possible".⁴ Pippin's Hegel is therefore more Kantian than the Hegel of Pinkard.⁵

I will oppose Pippin's reading to my own, more traditional metaphysical interpretation, which draws on German Hegel scholarship in particular but also intersects with interpretations by Frederick Beiser (2005) and Stephen Houlgate (2006, 2008). I agree with Rolf-Peter Horstmann (1984), Christian Iber (2000), and Dieter Henrich (2007) that Hegel

proposes a pre-Kantian metaphysics of structures or, as Horstmann puts it, a “relation-ontological model”.⁶ Hegel’s metaphysics is pre-Kantian and akin to Spinoza’s and Leibniz’s rationalism, in that it does not discuss norms of knowledge.

Rather, Hegel looks into the nature of the mind-independent, physical world, as it is independently of being thought or judged, as well as the underlying structures of society and human thinking. Hegel’s metaphysics is a metaphysics of structures or relations, rather than a substance-metaphysics, because Hegel views structures/relations as more fundamental than substances *pace* Spinoza and Leibniz. (The relation of a substance to its accidents is one among several types of structures for Hegel). Everything in the world – whether biological, chemical, physical, or social – is defined by its internal structure as well as the structure of its external relations; separate, internally unstructured substances have no properties – besides the fact that they are unrelated, empty units, which is precisely their structure. For Hegel, there is only a limited number of basic types of structuring, all of which he discusses in his *Logic*. This means that everything has a characteristic structure, which necessarily displays one or several of the logical structures analysed in Hegel’s *Logic*.

While I agree with Horstmann et al. regarding the type of metaphysics Hegel pursues, I further develop their approach to show that commentators such as Henrich (1983) and Michael Theunissen (1982, 1994) are mistaken to allege authoritarian implications of such a metaphysics. This is possible, because the authoritarian worries of these thinkers are not linked to the traditional notion of metaphysics *per se*. In other words, they do not oppose as authoritarian the very idea that there are truths that do not depend on our shared convictions but are eternally valid. And, in contrast to Pippin, they do not reject the notion that the legitimacy of a society depends on that society displaying a specific and complex predetermined logical structure. Rather, the worries of Henrich et al. arise from the specific claims Hegel is taken to make about the structures of the best society.⁷

Hegel’s metaphysics is not only important to understand his theory of freedom. Michael Thompson (2018b) rightly proposes that a metaphysical reading of Hegel is particularly relevant today, because (i) it offers normative resources that many perceive as lacking in relativist pragmatist or postmetaphysical approaches; and (ii) Hegel’s metaphysics helps to turn the focus away from equal individuals towards the social whole, the power it has over individuals – and, I would add, the very unequal positions of power individuals occupy within it. While both metaphysical readings discussed here explicate normative implications of Hegel’s metaphysics, in different ways, my traditional metaphysical interpretation also turns the attention to the structure of society as a whole.

For Pippin, Hegel’s *Logic* provides norms that determine how thinking beings can best make sense of the world. He presupposes that societies

are made up of social and epistemic practices between free individuals and he argues that the most fundamental norms underlying those practices are ahistorical and eternal. Those norms are rather formal, as they do not define what is good, but what makes a particular conception of the good coherent and intelligible. The formal norms of intelligibility are, however, taken to have very real consequences, since actually existing in the social world requires claiming a status that others understand and accept. This is why Pippin notes that the *Logic* not only helps in “achieving compatible commitments”, but also concerns the correct “self-understanding” of “one’s involvement with institutions and with others” not as “domination” or “sacrifice” but as constitutive of one’s actual social existence.⁸

In my reading, Hegel’s metaphysics has a descriptive, a critical or evaluative, and a prescriptive function. This is so because, for Hegel, truly grasping an entity requires showing which of the more or less coherent logical structures it displays. The description of any phenomenon thus always comes with an evaluation of its coherence and internal problems. In fact, I take it that Hegel’s metaphysics does not only discuss successively more consistent types of structures or successively more successful ways of uniting elements into a whole. When analysing each of these structures, Hegel discusses the relative freedom and unfreedom of the whole towards its elements and vice versa, often explicitly speaking of “self-determination” or “being with oneself in the other”, which is his famous formula for freedom.⁹ Hegel asks, for example, whether a whole subsumes its elements forcefully, by imposing its laws, or whether it picks up on their internal structures to the effect that the whole’s freedom or self-determination co-exists with or even requires the self-determination of its parts.

Hegel’s *Logic* progresses from the least coherent and inclusive structure, which allows for problematic and limited types of freedom only, to the structure which enables most freedom and truly contains diversity. The *Logic* therefore prescribes which structure is best and which, hence, the best society ought to display. In his social philosophy, I therefore take Hegel to propose a structural theory of freedom. Hegel’s attention is primarily directed at the respective whole – not because he glorifies the whole as an instantiation of God as critics have worried, but because the social whole or structure determines the options, roles, functions, and freedom of human beings. Any serious discussion of freedom, therefore, has to focus on the social structure, how it functions, and whether it is beneficial for and controlled by individuals. This is why Hegel highlights the social whole and its rationality, in the sense of a coherent, harmonious organisation of its elements. I will argue that, for Hegel, the most coherently organised social order necessarily coincides with the society that is most inclusive and self-determining and that maximises the freedom of each individual.

After discussing the two varieties of metaphysics (Sections 1–3), I will argue that my alternative metaphysical Hegel is more realist when it comes to assessing the power of social structures (Section 4), focused on structural freedom rather than agency (Sections 5 and 6), and more empowering for and lenient towards individuals who can make their interests count and are free to be irrational and egoist (Section 7).

I

The Metaphysics of Pippin's Hegel

Pippin takes Hegel to reject the old, pre-Kantian “substantive metaphysics” of Spinoza and Leibniz, a metaphysics that wants to know “what there really is,” by detailing the “furniture of the universe”.¹⁰ Hegel’s new or post-Kantian metaphysics concerns “the authority and legitimacy of our claims to know”.¹¹ For Pippin, the three books of Hegel’s *Logic* look into “meta-concepts” or notions that underlie different types of predication and interpret them as increasingly more successful attempts at defining something: “*S* is *p*” (Logic of Being) allows only for inadequate definitions of objects; “*S* is essentially *p*” (Logic of Essence) allows for better definitions; and “*S* is a good *p*” (Logic of the Concept) allows for the best and most exhaustive definitions.¹² The more intelligible the definition of something is, the more “actual” it is for thought.¹³

As Horstmann rightly claims,¹⁴ Pippin’s Hegel uses Aristotle not to overcome Kant but to enrich him. The point Pippin’s Hegel takes from Aristotle is not that objects, independently of being thought, are like thought. Pippin’s Hegel rejects any metaphysics that “identifies thoughts with the essentialities of things”.¹⁵ Rather, Pippin’s Hegel assumes that the only relevant objects are objects “as thought/judged”.¹⁶ They are all that any sense-making being will ever have. There may well be entities that are non-conceptual, but if there are, they are a non-topic. Pippin takes Hegel to broadly agree with the Aristotelian notion that nature “is something that is only actual as the object or content of mind”.¹⁷ I agree with Horstmann¹⁸ that, for Pippin, “the object is a subjective representation of an object”, besides which there is something else, namely the world insofar as it is not conceptualised and made sense of by a subject.¹⁹

Therefore, when Pippin says his Hegel rejects what Pippin calls “impositionism”,²⁰ one has to take this claim with caution. Pippin’s Hegel rejects the Kantian self-limitation to the human subject and its species-specific way of knowing;²¹ he, therefore, rejects the notion of structures “imposed by us”²² onto content received from the world. There are limitations on how one can make sense of anything, but those limitations are logical, imposed by the aim of making coherent and intelligible assertions. Nevertheless, Pippin’s Hegelian metaphysics is still an impositionism of sorts, insofar as it looks at the rules any finite, rational being necessarily uses to

make sense of the world – and, hence, imposes onto the world, which is otherwise senseless for any finite, rational being.

It is easy to agree with Pippin that it is pointless to try to inhabit a perspective besides the one that any thinking being necessarily inhabits. Nevertheless, it is helpful to note that Pippin's approach includes (i) empirical concepts, (ii) meta-concepts or norms that are “presupposed in any [empirical] specification”,²³ and (iii) the world insofar as it is not “thought/judged”.²⁴ Some may want to say that (iii) refers to a non-conceptual leftover, but this is too narrow. The world insofar as it is not thought or known also includes houses, cars, and tables, whose existence bears the mark of human concepts, but which are not identical to the representation or knowledge of them and which would continue existing if there were nobody to make sense of them. The world insofar as it is not known or thought about is irrelevant *for thought*, almost by definition. Nevertheless, it provides an input or matter required for empirical concept formation.

The fact that there is a remnant, something that does not belong to the theory of Pippin's Hegel, contradicts Hegel's claim to an *absolute* idealism, which encompasses everything, the entire subject and (all kinds of) object(s). The leftover of the world is also relevant in Pippin's social philosophy, where the natural and physical world can become relevant only when given the right normative form, while also providing some matter for thought or norm-based behaviour.

II

My Reading of Hegel's Metaphysics

Iber summarises the traditional metaphysical way in which many, primarily German Hegelians, interpret Hegel's metaphysics: Hegel supposes that “reality, be it spiritual or natural reality, is essentially structured by relations of form [*Formverhältnisse*], which are in turn graspable according to the formalities of our thought structures”.²⁵ Hegel enquires into the basic structural relations underlying mind-independent reality (as well as social reality and human reasoning). These structures can be analysed by means of human thinking, not because they stem from us, but because our reason is one realm within which these structures are at work. This is why Hegel's ontological inquiry takes the form of a logic, i.e. a science of thought.

I take Hegel's *Logic* to address the following question: how can plurality and the whole, unity and difference co-exist in the world, and what patterns enable or structure their co-existence? The *Logic* progresses from the simplest pattern possible to ever more complex and coherent patterns. After proposing that all that exists is just one undifferentiated being, Hegel is immediately forced to make space for plurality. He

proposes there must be “determinate being(s)” (WL1 115–38/109–28), a multiplicity of entities, which have being as a shared feature or are “something” distinct from “another” (WL1 225–131/117–122). He then goes on to discuss among other things: the “many” that are also just “one” entity spread out into many units (WL1 182–208/164–84); the unity that consists in “indifference” to the distinctions between things (WL1 445–56/375–88); things as the “appearances” that share the same origin or “essence” (WL2 147–63/499–511); the one “substance” and its “accidents” (E1 §§150–2; WL2 186–99/530–40); the difference in unity that he calls “the concept” (WL2 273–300/600–21); the mechanical laws uniting objects (WL2 409–27/711–26); the organism as an internally differentiated system (E1 §216; WL2 476/766); and so on.

All these structures are not thought determinations or ways sense-making beings coherently think of elements as belonging together. Rather they are patterns that exist in physical nature (independently of whether anybody makes sense of nature or not), as well as in human thought and interaction. Hegel assumes that everything in the world, be it natural, physical, or social, has a structure and displays one or several of the basic types of structuring discussed in the *Logic*. He presupposes a hierarchy of natural and spiritual entities from less to more complex, just as he supposes a hierarchy from simple to ever more complex logical structures. Simple things and elements of complex entities display simple structures from the beginning of the *Logic*, while complex logical structures systematically characterise more complex things and the interconnection of all things. This means that while the constellations at the beginning of the *Logic* can be exemplified by a stone, as well as by legal personhood, the later structures are only present in complex natural phenomena, organisms, and, finally, human thought, action, and interaction.

To understand this type of metaphysics, it is helpful to think of laws and regularities in nature like the elliptical movement of planets.²⁶ Ellipses are not empirical concepts; Kepler did not discover the elliptical form by observing nature. The ellipsis is a structure or shape that is arrived at by pure reason and yet it is also present in mind-independent reality. In other words, Hegel does not propose that planetary movements are described as elliptical in astrophysics. Rather, he says that planetary movements are elliptical, whether anybody knows or conceptualises it. And Hegel believes that this is a commonly held assumption. He laments our taking for granted that we cognise nature by means of reason, presupposing that physical, external nature is itself rational, while we do not accept that the same holds for social reality (EPR: 15/12). Hegel offers a “philosophical exposition that uses a so-called *a priori* method in an otherwise empirical science” (VG 87f/64). But like Kepler, this does not mean he is “importing ideas into matter” (VG 87f/64). The logical principles and structures that can be known *a priori* are present or active in the mind-independent world, as well as in society and human thought.

III

"Pre-Positing": Absolute Idealism and the Two Different Hegels

A key difference between my reading and Pippin's can be explained via Hegel's notion of pre-positing/presupposing and reflection. For Pippin, the *Logic* discusses "positing" and "reflection" on such positing, the pre-suppositions of judgements, and the "consciousness" of those presuppositions.²⁷ This point goes back to the core of Hegel's disagreement with Kant. Hegel delivered a scathing critique of Kant's position, which is derisively characterised as "pre-positing" and "external reflection" (WL2 31/404f.) with Kant developing a "philosophy of reflection" (GW). "Pre-positing" or "presupposing" means positing something as un-positing, cheating oneself into believing that what one presupposes is independently true. Among other things, Hegel is referring to Kant's thing-in-itself. The thing-in-itself, the unknowable external reality is nothing but a posit by Kant.

The question is "What does Hegel conclude from this insight? Does he embrace this idea, as Pippin suggests,²⁸ and argue that all objects are posited by thinking? Or is Hegel making the critical point that taking the object as an independent substance inaccessible to thought is but a creation of thought, a (possibly false) assumption?" Kant shows that an inaccessible object is necessarily implied in a judgement-based theory of knowledge, but judgements only provide a flawed and limited kind of knowledge, for Hegel. In fact, while metaphysicians like Spinoza or Leibniz are superior to Kant, insofar as they assume that "the determinations of thought are the basic determinations of objects" (E1 §28), one of their mistakes is to develop their theories by way of judgements.²⁹ When one overcomes this problematic type of knowledge, one can revitalise metaphysics and overcome Kant's unwarranted "fear of the object" (WL 45/51). That is to say, when one stops attributing predicates to subject terms, guided by the principles and requirements of subjective thought, and begins observing an object's *own* internal structure and the unfolding of its elements, then one can start to see that the object is itself rational and conceptually structured. This is the position of my metaphysical Hegel: mind-independent reality, the physical and external world is knowable, and akin to thought.

Interpreting Hegel in this way allows one to make better sense of both Hegel's absolute idealism and his opposition to the "subjective idealism" of Kant and Fichte. It is a significant weakness in Pippin's approach that he not only interprets Hegel's *Logic* as a theory of judgement, but also proposes a strong link between Hegel and these two thinkers. For Hegel, Fichte's and Kant's "subjective idealism states: There are no external things; they are but a determination of our self" (VGP 207) and "real

existence . . . external being is sublated in the simplicity of the I, it is only for me, it is ideally within me" (WL1 137/155).³⁰ Hegel's absolute idealism, by contrast, agrees with "ordinary realistic consciousness" (E1 §45A) – i.e. Hegel accepts that there are many objects that would continue to exist (and have the same logical structure) after the demise of sense-making beings. Nevertheless, Hegel's philosophy is a form of idealism, as he proposes that what seems to exist independently must be considered an "ideal moment" of a broader system (E1 §160A), whose basic structure he calls "the Idea".³¹ Schelling (1994: 138, 143, 151), Hegel's erstwhile friend and collaborator, notes in many places that Hegel wanted to encompass the material world in his philosophy: "existence", "nature", and not merely their concepts. And he remarks that Hegel follows a pre-Kantian, Leibnizian rationalist metaphysics in doing so, presupposing that mind-independent reality can be known through pure reason.³²

Does this difference matter for Hegel's *Realphilosophie*? Yes. A structural metaphysical reading can do justice to the richness of Hegel's thought, as it relies on Hegel's method of sublation (*Aufhebung*). The German term "aufheben" means "to keep", and Hegel claims that he keeps elements of all criticised positions and relations. In my reading, this means that simpler logical relations are elements of the more coherent structures discussed later in the *Logic*. It also means that all parts of the *Logic* have some relevance for each part of his *Realphilosophie*. This is to say: you can show how the simple types of structures presented in the *Logic of Being* are at work in parts of today's social world – in simpler relations like abstract right.³³

For Pippin, by contrast, only the end of the *Logic*, namely the concept as he interprets it, captures modern society. Furthermore, the "domain of relevance" of the *Logic* is, on Pippin's reading, primarily the realm of philosophy: "those objects about which we say nonempirically what they are: *Geist*, the state, friendship, art, religion".³⁴ Hegel's metaphysics provides guidelines to define something coherently and argues that the more intelligible something is, the more actual it is for sense-making beings. This is most relevant for notions that can be defined "nonempirically", meaning: (almost) exclusively conceptually, with little reference to sensory detail. The notions Pippin mentions like art or friendship function as norms, which actual empirical phenomena need to embody in order to count as true art or a true friendship.

In my reading, on the contrary, Hegel's metaphysics applies to the entire natural and social world. Hegel detects basic structuring principles that are part of the thing's *own* structure, the physical blood circulation (not the description of it), the interaction between organs, the structure of a plant, and so on. Before discussing Hegel's social philosophy in more detail, it is important to specify what exactly Hegel refers to when he speaks of society, on the two readings.

IV

Hegel's Social World and Social Individuals

For Pippin, Hegel's metaphysics is not concerned with the "furniture of the universe".³⁵ Similarly, Hegel's social philosophy is not concerned with what there is in society, cars, buildings, human bodies, quasi-natural regularities. Pippin's Hegel is interested in "the normative, the type of actions that are characterised by the effort of 'doing it correctly'".³⁶

Pippin's Hegel basically transforms Habermas's notion of a social space governed only by the structures of rational argumentation, by saying that (i) what counts as rational argumentation is largely historical and intersubjectively developed rather than *a priori*, and (ii) the entire modern social world is a social space thus reconceived. For Pippin, the modern social order derives its authority not from an appeal to brute force or a God-given right, but from an appeal to reasons, as does the authority of the different positions and roles within this society. This is why modern society is more "actual" than earlier societies, a better expression of "what a real social order is",³⁷ namely one that is appropriate to thinking beings. The acts and roles of human beings function like claims that others freely reject or accept based on collectively shared norms.

For Pippin, "freedom is normatively constrained judgement and rational action".³⁸ The norms or reasons that make me an actual subject can only be obtained from and validated within practices or social roles by receiving, interpreting, and presenting as reasons the considerations that people usually have as parents, consumers, property owners, and so on.³⁹ Being an actual subject is not a natural fact but requires acting in a way that makes me an intelligible instance of subjectivity. While the norms or definitions of what it is to be a subject or a property owner are themselves historical, their intelligibility depends on ahistorical meta-concepts outlined in the *Logic*. The historical norms are constantly revised, discussed, and improved and lose their validity if most individuals come to find them indefensible. Additionally, and importantly, norms are only binding for any individual if there is a "genuinely subjective" endorsement on the part of that individual, rather than a mere "re-enactment of an inherited convention".⁴⁰

My traditional metaphysical Hegel, by contrast, makes the realist point that society does not primarily consist in practices and norms that bind persons only if they agree with them and that cease to exist once we all disagree with them. Everything is structured, but only some aspects of some structures are norm-based practices. In fact, there is an enormous infrastructural, legal, logistical underbelly to our social world that would not change immediately even if we changed our collective mind.

Let us take the market as an example: while exchange of equivalents, equal rights for all persons, and the "fulfilment of a contract"⁴¹ can be

considered some of the norms of the market, those norms are different from the structure of the market in the sense of economic laws like the price mechanism. One could say that human beings may refrain from participating in market relations; in this sense, there is an element of consent. However, one does not really have the option of not participating – unless one goes to absolute extremes. Similarly, a particular person may decide not to abide by the norms governing fatherhood. But from parental leave to the lack of baby changing units in men's restrooms, there are many legal, institutional, and even infrastructural limits that make dissenting very difficult. And even if we all managed to erase racism from every corner of our minds, there would still be books, songs, and statues, as well as unequal income distribution, housing segregation, missed job opportunities, maternal deaths, incarcerations, life chances, and much more that would still bear the mark of racism.

In my reading, Hegel starts with the basic assumptions that (i) all interpersonal (and other) relations distribute positions of power, functions, and roles – and exist within a large structured web of relations (i.e. *pace* Pippin, structures are not those of rational coherence that free and equal agents require of each other); (ii) those structures have an independence from human beings that goes beyond mere habit (i.e. *pace* Pippin, structures are not just binding if and to the extent that we consider them valid); (iii) in contrast to what Pippin's Hegel suggests, structures are not necessarily something good or conducive to human freedom.

It is worth expanding on point (iii). Pippin's Hegel blurs the distinction between "the normative", in the sense of practices that involve notions of how one does something right, and the normative question of whether those practices are good. Partly, this has to do with the fact that Pippin only looks at modern society, within which, he assumes, authority is justified by convincing reasons.⁴² And, partly, it has to do with the notion that social practices enable us to be subjects in the first place. But there are stable social practices and roles – e.g. the Mafia code or cisgender, "real" masculinity – which provide a sense of self and reasons that are adequate given the contexts. And yet, these stable social practices and norms, however, are not necessarily positive ones. To make matters worse, the possibility of individual criticism or "genuinely subjective"⁴³ endorsement is limited. Since human beings are subjects only by participating in practices, they can criticise practices only based on other practices in which they partake. Freedom and my evaluation of society thus have much to do with a coherence of commitments. But this coherence can be interpreted very differently: the equality of persons may seem to contradict a strong male-female distinction, while the importance of specific roles speaks in favour of it. And even if modern social norms were coherent, it is debatable whether they work to the benefit of most people.

Pippin adds other elements to his account to avoid this problem. For example, Pippin suggests that, for Hegel, the "realisation of the object's

potential”, like one’s masculinity, only carries a normative weight if this “object itself is a rationally required component of the objective human world, required for that world to be truly a human one”.⁴⁴ Again, this is a vague criterion for an important distinction. Discourses on masculinity, for example, go both ways, with some arguing that a strong male-female distinction and/or proactive men are important for our value system, the family, or even the survival of mankind, and others denying it.

In my reading, by contrast, the normative question of whether a structure is good is separate from the question of whether there are structures at play (which there always are). This is so for two reasons. First, human beings are in a much stronger position to evaluate and make demands on society. This is so not only because Hegel’s *Logic* provides them with the notion of what the best social order ought to be like. More importantly, human beings have complex identities that do not coincide with practices or roles – and which enable them to notice and complain when a structure works to their disadvantage. Human beings cannot only reason or, indeed, have valid needs within the realm provided by them. This is so because of the natural composition of human beings, their reflective capacity, and simply because norm-based practices are not all there is in society, and hence human beings are subjected and react to much more pressures and realities than reasons and norms.

Second, the *Logic* shows that not all structures benefit the elements involved. In fact, more specifically, Hegel proposes that the market economy is a “monstrous system” that needs to be “tamed like a wild beast” (JS 230/249), as he puts it in the early Jena years. Lisa Herzog has convincingly shown that this remains Hegel’s position in his *Philosophy of Right*,⁴⁵ where, while drawing on Smith’s account of the price mechanism or “invisible hand”, he remains critical of said mechanism. I want to propose that Hegel understands the market laws with the help of his logical notion of “objective laws,” which he describes as the “cunning of reason” (E1 §209A). Objective laws pick up on the internal characteristics of objects (their weight and volume or, in a social context, the preferences and decisions of individuals). Nevertheless, because the object contains its characteristics as a mere “aggregate” (WL2 411/712), i.e. in an unstructured manner, it cannot establish relations to other objects based on its character. Therefore, the relations between objects take the form of a law-like, external imposition or “violence” (WL2 420–1/721) towards the objects. Similarly, market laws function like an “external” or “blind necessity” (E3 §532) imposing prices, deciding who can buy and sell, and where investments are made, and they do so by accumulating the unstructured decisions of atomistic market participants.

This means that modern individuals experience the market as not reflecting their needs, interests, or intentions – which enables them to reflect on, formulate, and specify their interests. And it also leads Hegel to conclude, as will be seen at the end of the next section, that the function

of the political institutions is for individuals to collectively control and re-appropriate the market.

V

Overcoming Moralität and the Standpoint of Agency

In my reading, Pippin's Hegel fails to truly overcome the standpoint of *Moralität*, or, indeed, the standpoint of agency. Hegel derives the term "*Moralität*" or "morality" from the French "*le moral*" as opposed to "*le physique*" (E3 §503). Morality encompasses everything internal that a subject wants to externalise (E3 §503), which includes purposes, intentions, and one's notion of the good. In the Morality chapter in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel shows that freedom based on individual agency is important, but flawed and insufficient. While Pippin is adamant that Hegel does not pursue a theory of "causal agency",⁴⁶ of atomistic agents independently causing their actions, his Hegel, in contrast to mine, nevertheless remains concerned with agency – with its social conditions or constitution.

I will sketch Hegel's argument in the Morality chapter to show where the two interpretations diverge. Hegel distinguishes three types of acting: acting on purpose, with intention, and based on one's conscience. "The aim [of the Morality chapter] is that this subjective will becomes identical to the concept of the will; in itself it is identical with it" (PRV21: §114). The structure of the Morality chapter is based on the assumption that the subjective will, the will of any one particular actor, ought to become identical to the concept of free willing. The concept of free willing is self-relation, an identity with oneself (EPR: §108A); Hegel interprets the (Kantian) demand of a non-contradiction of the will as an identity between the will's internal aim and its external expression, or the "maxim" and the "act" (PRV19: §105).⁴⁷ With each new form of acting Hegel discusses, the aspect of self-relation in the individual's interaction with the world can thus be expected to increase ideally to a point where change brought about by the act is nothing but an expression of the individual will and, hence, the individual act of willing completely instantiates the form of free willing.⁴⁸

Interestingly, Hegel presents the three types of acts both in terms of the self-relation or the "return into oneself" (EPR: §141N), and in terms of a "breach" (EPR: §118) between those aspects of the act that are wanted and those that are not, wherein the subject fails to be free. Hegel summarises the progression of the Morality chapter as follows: "Subjectivity – return into itself – α) knowledge of what is immediate – β) the universal of the deed – γ) the universal nature in terms of the concept – the good" (EPR: §141N). When acting on purpose, one wants the "immediate" movement of one's muscles and their immediate

effect; one wants and achieves an “alteration to this given existence [*Dasein*]” (EPR: §115). The problem is that there is a “breach within the action . . . between what is given and simply there and what is produced [by me]” (EPR: §118). What is “given” conditions my act and is not part of my freedom. My deed is at the mercy of “external forces” and has “remote and alien consequences” (EPR: §118) and, indeed, a social meaning I did not take into account. Acting with intention, by contrast, means wanting the “universal of the deed” (EPR: §141N), its social meaning and usual consequences, which therefore form part of my freedom.

When introducing intention, Hegel thus makes a point that Pippin,⁴⁹ Michael Quante,⁵⁰ and others have highlighted: the “act-description” of my act is not within my control; or, in Hegel’s words, acts have a “universal predicate” (EPR: §119) and exist within “circumstances” (EPR: §119A) that I must acknowledge. If I want my act to be understood correctly and not done away with, my action has to “conform to what is recognised as valid in the world” (EPR: §132).

If this were Hegel’s last word on the matter, Katerina Deligiorgi rightly points out, agency would be reduced to “social etiquette” whereupon acts are evaluated against “what is socially current at any one time”.⁵¹ However, Hegel says that when realising an intention, there is a “breach” between “what is given externally as a universal will and the particular determination I attribute to it” (EPR: §118). The universal meaning of an act is given to me by social custom. What I intend with this deed, in terms of my well-being or simply what I want my deed to mean, is not necessarily identical to the social meaning.

The subject thus encounters a dilemma that Pippin’s and my Hegel tackle very differently. There seem to be two impossible alternatives: On the one hand, there is (i) the possibility of choosing between and enacting given social options. Hegel famously rejects choice as a strong form of freedom. He does so not because the options offered by society may be bad or one may not know how to decide between them. Rather, the problem is that the “will has some content, but not subjectivity itself as its content” (EPR: §120N):

The good and the right are also a content – not just a natural content, but a content that is posited by my rationality itself; and to make my freedom the content of my will is a pure determination of my freedom itself.

(EPR: §121A)

Freedom in a strong sense cannot consist in the formality that I have chosen this option, that I agree with the norm governing my behaviour. *The highest degree of freedom requires that the content of my will, what I want, stems from me.*

This notion of freedom (ii), at least when read along Kantian lines, also seems *impossible*. Enacting purely the “concept of the will”, the pure form of free willing would, indeed, mean total freedom because it is me determining myself without any external input. However, Kant’s pure principle of freedom is famously “non-productive” (EPR: §135A) for Hegel: one cannot derive any content, any specific aims, social structures or rules from Kant’s formal principle of freedom. Hence, Kant’s formal principle of freedom cannot inform any actions.

This is where Pippin and I diverge: For Pippin, Hegel chooses option (i). Pippin’s Hegel opposes any prescription by “pure practical reason”⁵² – or, indeed, by pure theoretical reason. For Pippin, individuals have to “genuinely subjectively” appropriate or interpret the socially given.⁵³ In my reading, by contrast, Hegel argues for option (ii). Subjectivity, the free will, and reason have a specific, unchanging, and pure structure, and he proposes that wanting this structure (to exist in the world) is the true form of freedom. Kant was right to demand a pure, *a priori* principle of freedom, but he defined it incorrectly. If defined correctly, this *a priori* principle is productive and enables us to see what the best society is like.

From where does this new principle of freedom and its implied, complex structure suddenly emerge? Hegel only obliquely references the Actuality chapter in his *Logic of Essence*.⁵⁴ Throughout his *Logic*, Hegel discusses ever more complex ways of uniting plurality and the whole. I take it that these structures are nothing but basic types of freedom or “being with oneself in the other”, ways in which a whole is self-related in its parts and those parts are “with themselves”, affirmed or not by the whole and other elements. Hegel’s *Logic* thus not only improves Kant’s notion of what freedom is, namely not pure self-relation, but a self-relation that involves otherness. More importantly, the development of the *Logic* shows that this revised principle of freedom is “productive”; it generates a very complex and specific structure from a first notion that unity and difference co-exist. Hegel references the Actuality chapter because after discussing atomistic persons and separate subjects sharing the same moral essence, he starts analysing the social whole – and how it is “actualised” in its elements, expressed and visible in their interrelation.⁵⁵

VI

The State-Subject and State-Organism

In my reading, Hegel thus proposes that the structures of free relations discussed in the *Logic* pre-define which structures the best type of state needs to display. Pippin’s Hegel suggests something ostensibly similar. The political state can be considered good because it is the “embodiment of rational self-legislation”.⁵⁶ The problem is, of course, that any state is self-legislating if sovereign, which means that one needs a much

more detailed argument to show why Hegel's version of the modern state best embodies self-legislation. Pippin can refrain from specifying further, because the notion that the state embodies self-legislation is unimportant for his account. The argument is neither that individuals ought to want the pure principle of self-legislation and measure the state against it, nor that one can deduce a concrete state structure from such a principle. Rather, the argument is that human beings need social practices to have reasons for acting and, then – almost as an afterthought – that modern practices are good, because they are similar to a subject. And Pippin attributes only a “light,” “non-regulative” notion of political institutions to Hegel.⁵⁷

This contrasts with a more traditional metaphysical reading. From this viewpoint, the question is “What are the key logical structures discussed from the Actuality chapter onward and what do they mean for Hegel's account of the state in his *Philosophy of Right*?” Henrich,⁵⁸ Habermas,⁵⁹ and others have worried about Hegel's logical notions of absolute subjectivity and the organism, and their link to state-subject and state-organism. Does the state-subject reduce human beings to its tools? Does the state-organism attribute predetermined functions to them? In my reading, Hegel's *Logic* paints a different picture. Hegel's reasoning concerns the whole, which in social terms he calls “the state”, meaning society as a whole, as opposed to the political institutions, which he calls “the political state” (EPR: §§267, 273). Hegel argues that the whole or absolute cannot be something that exists alongside finite things (human beings). If it were, it would not be all-encompassing and would consequently be instable and incoherent. The whole must rather be present in finite things and their relations. The whole can only be present in finite things and their relations if it is nothing but an expression of their natures or characters (their respective interests and collective decisions).

Paul Giladi is therefore right to defend Hegel against Adorno's worries that Hegel disregards individuality in the search for unity.⁶⁰ Individuality requires negation or differentiation for Hegel, to be sure; however, that does not mean that individuals are nothing but knots in a web of relations or nothing but their differences from others. Hegel overcomes this viewpoint already within the *Logic of Being* and argues for an internal self-differentiation as well. What that implies first comes to the fore in Hegel's concept of “formed matter” (WL2 93f/454), whereby he proposes that matter has its own form. The total relations of form must express matter's form rather than impose a form onto unformed matter.⁶¹ The separation between the absolute and finite things can only be overcome, as Hegel puts it, if the whole and finite things are “one and the same content,” and only display “a difference in form” (E1 §153A). The most emphatic formulation of this reasoning can be found in the transition to the logical notion of the organism, which recovers and specifies a structure Hegel calls the Concept: “[E]xternal determinateness

[of finite things] has now further developed into self-determining” (WL2 444/740). “The object must spontaneously (out of its own impetus) unite into the unity of the Concept” (WL2 451/746). A whole with the form of the Concept is nothing but the relations things establish “out of their own impetus”.

Pace Henrich, Hegel explicitly says that the (state-)organism does not refer to pre-established functions, “determinations that are external to/ for (them)” (WL2 457/750), into which human beings must fit. *Pace* Pippin, it does not mean that human beings only become individuals, and fully human, by inhabiting roles. Rather, human beings have identities and (particular economic) interests, and the state-organism, namely the estates assembly with representatives for each professional group, is where they coordinate those interests to ensure that their relations benefit all groups.⁶²

The organism is an aesthetic Romantic ideal.⁶³ It denotes both the beauty of a proportionate, balanced order (where no organ or social group dominates the others) and a natural, free self-organisation of the participating groups. Hegel contrasts an organicist state with a mechanistic or “machine” state (VD 481/22), where rulers treat social groups like lifeless parts of a machine. Hegel speaks of a “spiritless” administrative state where a “formless mass” of atomistic individuals is “regulated from above” (VD 484/25). The rulers feel an “illiberal jealousy of the independent command and organisation of an estate, corporation etc.” (VD 481/22) and do not allow for “the participation of one’s own will in universal affairs” (VD 482/23). In an organicist state, by contrast, estates assembly is the powerful legislative and market-regulating organ where different groups represent and coordinate their interest to their mutual benefit. They do so not only by making laws, but also by approving the budget (see E3 §544), regulating prices, and even, if necessary, “determining everyone’s labour” (EPR: §236).⁶⁴

Hegel’s notion of absolute, self-knowing state-subjectivity adds two propositions: in the best social order, subject and object need to be identical (human beings and social groups are both the subject and the object of law-making) and human beings must know what they aim for in law-making. In the best social order, the members of the estates assembly consciously try to preserve an organic, well-balanced, and mutually beneficial organisation of interests as well as spaces where individuals can freely live other, less immediately interdependent aspects of their personalities.

VII

Empowering Real Individuals vs. Subjectivity as a Status

Despite its focus on the social whole and predetermined rational structures, the Hegel of my metaphysical reading empowers individuals – much

more so than Pippin's. Critics of a metaphysical reading of my sort have often admonished that individuals do not collectively decide what the best and most rational social order is like. This is true. However, Hegel is clear that human beings are free not to do what is most rational.⁶⁵ And it must be said that even on Pippin's reading, present-day individuals do not freely decide what the best society is either. They merely pick up on and, within the given social limits, evaluate what previous generations have assumed to be so.

But, in my reading, Hegel is more lenient, accepting, and empowering towards individuals in their entire personas, including their irrational, egoist, and natural aspects and particular interests. As noted, freedom is norm-based, "rational action" for Pippin.⁶⁶ The more reasons I can give for my action, the "freer" this action is, the more it is "genuinely mine".⁶⁷ This makes me a better or more complete actualisation of the essence of a human and thinking being. Since Pippin assumes that only social practices and roles provide us with reasons, this practically means the following: the more I can inhabit a role, take the reasons or considerations offered for a role to be mine, shape my drives, needs, and desires in a manner that is adequate to my role, the freer and the more fully human I am.⁶⁸

In my reading, by contrast, Hegel assumes that, legally, one cannot be more or less of a person and any act is, as a matter of fact, attributed to the individual who acted (even though the sentence will be more lenient if one was overtaken by emotions). Hegel does not add normative pressure to this legal fact; he does not add the notion that one is a better, fuller, freer actualisation of a human being, the better one can explain one's acts. In fact, I believe Hegel is open to the idea that freedom also requires not having to be a coherent subject all of the time. *Pace* McDowell (2007), irrational impulses do not need to be rationalised because they need not be attributable to me. Hegel allows for individuals to be irrational and egoistic, to act on natural impulses, and to refrain from giving reasons to themselves and others.⁶⁹ The term "rationality" has its most important application not in human beings, but in the social structure, which ought to be rational, in the sense of a coherent, inclusive, harmonious order.

Furthermore, for Pippin, individuals have to come to the "habitualised understanding" that what appear to be "sacrifices of individuality or the domination of individuals by larger social wholes" are actually part of their freedom.⁷⁰ They need to "accept the purpose of the world as their own" and want to participate in "the good" or "what the state of the world requires".⁷¹

In my reading, by contrast, there is no universal good, no "purpose of the world" or state besides the rational structuring and coordination of particular interests and the coherent inclusion of all aspects of human beings. Otherwise, the common good would be an empty notion.⁷² Hegel could not anticipate the complexities of today's identities and probably

underestimated those that existed in his time. Nevertheless, his reasoning implies that, when Sara Ahmed writes about a world that does not “accommodate”⁷³ her as a homosexual woman of colour, it is not up to her to try to feel accommodated and come to believe that her true identity consists in the roles she inhabits. Rather, it is up to the social world to ensure that the groups she belongs to have the power to shape the world in such a way that it corresponds to their needs and interests as much as to those of others.

I thus agree with Honneth⁷⁴ that capturing the normative element of Hegel’s argument involves focusing on his ideal of a complete inclusion of all individuals with all their aspects. The difference lies in what we take this to mean. This is not the place to discuss potential internal weaknesses of Honneth’s position, such as an overly partitioned stereotypical view of human beings and their needs (for types of recognition), or his focus on recognition in the sense of the subject feeling supported and accepted (rather than human beings shaping their world). The fundamental difference between Honneth’s more pragmatist and my more metaphysical approach relates back to the relation between the universal and the particular. Giladi is right to point out that Adorno criticised Hegel for prioritising the universal over the particular or prioritising unity over plurality. However, at least in my reading, the solution is not to say that what really matters for Hegel is intersubjectivity, human beings, and their structured relations.

Rather, the whole or unity is, indeed, of paramount interest for Hegel. This is his controversial but compelling core metaphysical proposition. However, the question remains: What does the best social whole look like for Hegel? I argue that it is an organic collective subjectivity. Unlike Honneth’s, Pippin’s, and, indeed, Giladi’s reading, my Hegel is thus not concerned with the intersubjective conditions or “relational institutions”⁷⁵ required for individuals to achieve self-realisation and a healthy subjectivity. In my reading, Hegel is not concerned with “the reciprocal satisfaction of their individual aims”,⁷⁶ others promoting my “preferred form of self-realisation”.⁷⁷ He is not concerned with my choice, my project, my perception of said project and of the participation of others in it. This is too subjectivist.

In my reading, Hegel begins with the social whole, admits its predominance, and then proposes that he knows how it ought to be shaped, namely as an organism and collective subjectivity along the lines described in his *Logic*. By proposing this metaphysical structure to be realised in social reality, Hegel empowers individuals through the backdoor, as it were, by pointing out that the best structure is the one in which individual (economic) groups coordinate their interests (which they have not as a matter of choice or self-perception, but as a by-product of occupying a position within a structured system). Hegel is, certainly, speaking of

“institutionalising cooperation”⁷⁸ in the labour, and, indeed, commodity market. Giladi (2020) and Bernardo Ferro⁷⁹ are right: Hegel not only rejects a purely representative democracy,⁸⁰ but his critique of capitalism also raises the question *whether what Hegel envisions is still a capitalist economy*. But Hegel insists on the importance of coordination, not in order for individuals to realise their projects. Coordination is required because Hegel speaks of identities, and he understands those identities (e.g. being a woman or person of colour) as roles or positions of power within a structure wherein another group benefits from them and will have to pay a certain cost when the other group asserts its interests.

In this chapter, I have outlined key differences between a more traditional metaphysical Hegel, closer to Marx, and a more pragmatic and (politically) liberal Hegel proposed by Pippin. While the social philosophy and metaphysics of my more traditional Hegel certainly do not provide a blueprint for a better society, they offer much needed input and a different perspective on the social whole, its power, and the best way to be free within it. Hegel proposes that all relations are structured and that we cannot be free unless we re-appropriate them; unless we collectively negotiate our different interests, find a mutually beneficial and balanced compromise, and then shape social structures accordingly by means of laws and market regulations. I can only agree with Adorno who insisted that one ought to ask “what the present means in the face of Hegel”,⁸¹ rather than whether “Hegel has any meaning for the present”. In other words, rather than claiming this and that Hegelian notion is outdated and idealist, it is more fruitful to acknowledge and discuss what Hegel believed necessary and possible, and measure reality against it.⁸²

Notes

1. See, for example the contributions to De Laurentiis (2016).
2. See Thompson (2018a).
3. I return to Schelling's anti-Kantian take on Hegel in Section 3. Marx (1973) famously takes inspiration from Hegel's *Logic* to analyse the structures and mechanism of the capitalist economy. For him, Hegel's philosophy concerns not rules for judgement or thought, but the real, mind-independent, physical world, within which Hegel detects rational structures (Marx mistakenly interprets this as a God-like subject realising itself in the world, which he opposes). See Marx (2005: 27, 1973: 101). Adorno is also clear that Hegel's metaphysics, in opposition to Kant's, is supposed to grasp the world as it is apart from being thought or experienced. See Adorno (1993: 307).
4. Pippin (2019: 61).
5. Pinkard has proposed that Hegel's *Logic* discusses the implications of concepts encountered empirically in the history of philosophy, for example. See Pinkard (1990: 835).
6. Horstmann (1984: 250).
7. For very recent critiques of the authoritarian reading of Hegel, see Baumann (Forthcoming) and Giladi (2017, 2020).

8. Pippin (2019: 271).
9. See for example VLM 93; 96; WL1 183/164; WL2 277/603; E1 §163A. That Hegel's entire *Logic* discusses forms of "being with oneself in the other" is my original proposition (Baumann 2012). Others have argued that Hegel discusses one relational topic throughout his *Logic*, which they do not identify with freedom (see Baumann 2012, Forthcoming: n41).
10. Pippin (2019: 44, 36, 137).
11. Pippin (2019: 190). I have provided an overview of Pippin's claims in Baumann (2019).
12. See Pippin (2019: 254).
13. Pinkard's claim remains valid that if one goes into detail and interprets each specific Hegelian concept as underlying a type of predication, the story becomes very odd. See Pinkard (1990).
14. See Horstmann (2019: 1039).
15. Pippin (2019: 42, cf. 124).
16. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 227f.
18. See Horstmann (2019: 1042).
19. One can also say, with John Burbidge (2014: 103, 106), that Pippin's Hegel still proposes a "logic", rather than "a fully-fledged metaphysics – one that probes into the being and ground of the universe that exists whether we happen to be thinking it or not".
20. See Pippin (2019: 80).
21. Pippin (2019: 126, 286).
22. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
25. Iber (2000: 15).
26. See VG 87/64.
27. Pippin (2019: 131, cf. 234).
28. Namely, Pippin (1989: 201).
29. See Horstmann (1990: 23–37).
30. As seen earlier, Pippin's Hegel denies that the object is "for me" and proposes that the only relevant object is the object "as thought/judged" (Pippin 2019: 131). Hence, he speaks of objects as they are "for thought" or "for any sense-making being".
31. See Stern (2008).
32. Namely Schelling (1994: 144, 162).
33. See Baumann (2018b).
34. Pippin (2019: 303).
35. Namely Pippin (2019: 36, 137).
36. Pippin (2005: 66).
37. Pippin (2008: 259).
38. Pippin (2019: 147).
39. See Pippin (2008: 263–264).
40. Pippin (2008: 69).
41. Pippin (1997: 388).
42. Namely "The norm's sanctioning force has some relation to intelligibility and universal justifiability" (Pippin 1997: 394).
43. Pippin (2008: 69).
44. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
45. See Herzog (2013: 51–58).
46. Pippin (2019: 271).

47. See EPR: §135 for the demand of non-contradiction. As Angelica Nuzzo (2011: 643, 644) puts it, the imperative requires avoiding “a contradiction in the action itself”, more precisely in the “actual realisation of action”.
48. See PRV21: §114.
49. Namely Pippin (2008: 153).
50. Namely Quante (1993: 112).
51. Deligiorgi (2012: 190).
52. Pippin (2019: 310).
53. This stretches Hegel's expressions like wanting a “content that is posited by my rationality itself”, having “subjectivity itself as a content”, having “the concept of the will” as my intention. And it does not help in overcoming the standpoint of individual agency. Admittedly, Pippin proposes that the state mirrors a Kantian type of self-legislation. However, this argument has a very different status than proposition (ii).
54. See EPR: §§130, 132.
55. For the logical structure of Abstract Right, see Baumann (2018b); see also Baumann (2012).
56. Namely Pippin (2008: 260–262).
57. Pippin (2008: 262).
58. Namely Henrich (1983: 31).
59. Namely Habermas (1988: 53).
60. Namely Giladi (2017: 217).
61. Henrich (1976: 210) proposes: “the manifold of things must be itself differentiated and also opposed to the whole. . . . Only thus can the unification with the whole be in correspondence with what it [the manifold] itself is”.
62. See Baumann (2018a).
63. See Chytry (1989: 142).
64. See also Houlgate (1991: 204–205). Giladi (2017: 222, 2020) is, therefore, right to insist that Hegel's rational state is not the liberal state of modern capitalism.
65. See VR1 14.
66. Pippin (2019: 147).
67. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
68. For Pippin (2005: 69), drives need to be “rationalised”, in the sense that I adequately take others into account when satisfying them. I can do so only as a concrete ethical being, i.e. along the guidelines provided by fatherhood, citizenship, market participation, and so on.
69. See Baumann (2018b).
70. Pippin (2019: 271).
71. *Ibid.*, p. 309.
72. See Bauman (2018a: 71–78).
73. Namely Ahmed (2017: 14).
74. Namely Honneth (2003: 218–220).
75. Honneth (2014: 176).
76. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
77. Zurn (2015: 162).
78. Giladi (2020: 329).
79. Namely Ferro (2019: 233).
80. See Baumann (2018a).
81. HTS: 1.
82. I am extremely grateful to James Clarke, Paul Giladi, and Terry Pinkard for their very helpful comments.

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- Abbreviations of works by Hegel
German page number/English page number.
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- PRV21 – *Die Philosophie des Rechts. Vorlesungen von 1821/22*. H. Hoppe (ed.). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005.
- VD – ‘Die Verfassung Deutschlands’. In *Frühe Schriften*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971.
- VG – *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986; *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. J. C. Friedrich (ed.), J. Sibree (trans.). Mineola, NY: Dover, 1956.
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- VLM – *Vorlesungen über Logik und Metaphysik. Heidelberg 1817: Mitgeschrieben von F. A. Good, Hegel Vorlesungen. Band 11*. Hamburg: Meiner, 1992.
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6 Hegel, Actuality, and the Power of Conceiving

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In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel rejects a Platonic/Kantian normative model of essence and, with it, essentialist conceptions of identity and historical necessity. This rejection is grounded in his treatment of the concept [*der Begriff*], which thus enjoys real emancipatory power [*Macht*]. I will defend this claim not by comparing Hegel's "essence [*Wesen*]" with similar categories in the texts of Plato or Kant but, rather by focusing on two transitions in the *Logic* that illustrate Hegel's break from prior accounts of essence: the transition in Book I from "the ought [*das Sollen*]" to infinity, and the transitions in Book II from *Existenz* ("concrete existence") and appearance to actuality [*Wirklichkeit*]. Together, these transitions show how conceiving [*begreifen*] (or "grasping") is an anticipatory coming-to-be in relation to others, which is unlike the relation between "essence" and "form" in the tradition of Plato and Kant.

The progression in the *Logic* (from Book I to Book II) involves three categories of limitedness, which are taken up into determinacy or meaning [*Bestimmtheit, Bedeutung*]. For our purposes, Hegel's first major moves in Book I are his definition of logical predication, his discussion of the categories of limitedness, and the pivot to infinite discursive possibility (which I discuss in Section 1). Hegel then rearticulates a similar transition in the midst of Book II, where he modifies the Kantian category of appearance [*Erscheinung*] (or the phenomenal). Here, Hegel shows that a new type of intuited, linguistically composed materiality, combined with the three forms of limitedness, enables an advance towards the category of actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] (which I discuss in Sections 2 and 3). For Hegel, conceiving, or grasping [*begreifen*] requires an anticipatory self-movement of thought at the centre of which is actuality, which Herbert Marcuse takes to be the effective or operative [*wirkliche*] power of logical life¹ and the "deepest ground of Hegelian ontology".² With Marcuse, I maintain that actuality is Hegel's modification of Kantian judgement [*Urteil*], one that cannot, moreover, be understood as a "rule" or repeatable self-identity in the sense of a Kantian transcendental or a Freudian ego. Actuality bears an analogical relationship to Aristotelian *energeia* [ἐνέργεια], a productive self-relation in which the body [*Leib*]

of thought, language, seems to be at once patient and agent, similar to Aristotelian *poietikon* [ποιητικόν].³

From his earliest writings, one of Hegel's main concerns is the overcoming of Kantian oppositions of the understanding (concept/content, scheme/content, subjective/objective). These oppositions issue from the Kantian project of defining the scope and limits of transcendental consciousness. The resulting Kantian structure yields a mental rigidity, in which an agent "applies" a concept or scheme that has a limited function defined in advance of its application. For Hegel, though, concepts arise from a process of combining (or mediating) lexical elements without such fixed limits, a process that continually generates and is generated anew by thought. In this process of combining the components of meaning, thought becomes self-aware.

Thus, for Hegel, cognitive mediation [*Vermittlung*] must be self-reflective. By contrast, the Kantian oppositions mark the absence of reflectivity, or of a role for thought's development by means of its own self-relation. Hegel introduces this movement [*Bewegung*] of thought in the *Logic* by showing that conceiving's form and content are at once comprehended and comprehending intuiting [*begriffnes und begreifendes Anschauen*]⁴ or mental power [*geistige Macht*]. To use Kantian vocabulary, we might say that thought's form is given in intuiting.

John Burbidge's translation of *Begriff* as "conceiving" rather than "concept" is especially apt for designating the operative power of mediating, reflective cognition.⁵ The difficulty with translating *Begriff* with the term "concept" is that it retains the Kantian connotations of having a set scope and limit and operating as a pre-set function that can be "applied". Burbidge's translation, "conceiving", is more descriptive of conceptual mediation [*Vermittlung*], the Hegelian term which replaces the Kantian "synthesis". Hegel's project in the *Logic* is to show that if a natural language is understood as a totality, or conceptual scheme, it must also be understood as a historical framework perpetually in the midst of transformation by its actual uses.⁶ For if the form of conceiving is at once the content (of conceiving), then the Kantian dualism between malleable content and concepts cannot be kept; content can no longer be analysed in terms of Kantian appearances or deliverances of sensibility to which, in binding the content, a static concept is "applied".

For Marcuse, actuality is Hegel's version of the concept of judgement, and it is the turning point of the *Logic*. Hegelian actuality (judgement) is a productive self-relation that derives its anticipatory power by taking up logical possibility into itself.⁷ For Hegel, the category of actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] is the reflective core of conceiving and cognitive mediation [*Vermittlung*]; as such, it is the active principle of the human spirit or mind [*Geist*]. In what follows, I shall extend Marcuse's thesis that Hegel's category of actuality is the core of thought's self-movement, or

of its motility [*Bewegtheit*].⁸ On this model, judgement should be understood as an activity that combines heterogeneous lexical elements, such as sounds, ink marks, cases, tenses, logical relations, and syntax (as well as symbolic, analogical, and conventional meanings).

My goal is to extend Marcuse's interpretation of the *Logic* to treat the category of actuality in the context of recent feminism and political theory. I follow Marcuse in taking thought's activity to be at the centre of Hegel's anti-essentialist logic, which belongs to the nineteenth-century linguistic turn in philosophy. Indeed, Hegel's reworking of the traditional metaphysical categories into a modern logic emerges from a modernising process that problematises naturalised categories,⁹ turning from them to focus upon "the very logical processes through which meaning is [and horizons are] produced".¹⁰ Hegel's metaphysics as logic is a rethinking of our relationship to the past with a view to diversifying the meaning of truth. Hegel acknowledges modernity's dissatisfactions and the ensuing crisis of old meta-narratives.

But Hegel's logic is more than this, for, since Hegel prioritises logical possibility, his logic excludes any ultimate synthesis or stable resolution of tension among the heterogeneous elements of meaning. Hegel is less concerned with meaning as an idea [*εἶδος*] than with the question of how representations are produced by the movement of cognitive mediation and with the logical pre-conditions for new "thematic spaces".¹¹ His itinerary reflects a broader European cultural interest in ways of representing the world, or in the possibilities of a "new definition of the world",¹² and in logic as a "realm of relations . . . without a historical teleology".¹³

Hegel's logic challenges the Kantian idea of critique as an interrogation of cognition's scope and limits, dwelling instead on the logical means available for a fragmentary, "critical perfecting",¹⁴ a "dissolution [*Auflösung*] of the Subject in the work of art",¹⁵ or the poetic perfection of the fragmentary.¹⁶ Hegelian historical actuality is a combining activity without any postulated finality. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy thus associate Hegel's post-Kantianism with Aristotle's *energeia* [*ἐνέργεια*] and German Romanticism.¹⁷ In the *Logic*, actuality is thought's "own act [*eigenes Tun*]", a pure human intelligence [*Geist*] essentially in movement,¹⁸ and a true Romantic moment that is preparatory to, but not yet, action (and is perhaps even untranslatable into action). Walter Benjamin thus rightly contrasts a vulgar form of Romanticism, requiring a self that is "eternally secure",¹⁹ to the openness and living actuality of thought's genuine Romanticism.²⁰ As Benjamin writes (in 1913), "[w]e wish to hear nothing more of Hellenism and Germanism, of Moses and Christ, Arminius and Napoleon, of Newton and Euler, until we are shown the *spirit* in them, [the. . .] active reality".²¹ In this chapter, I develop Benjamin's insight in connection with Hegel's logic by showing the prominence of possible logical relations for actuality's Romantic, active openness.

I

One aim of Hegel's logic is to analyse thought's structure in terms of a conceptual power [*Macht*] that operates upon heterogeneous grammatical and lexical elements. In Book I of the *Logic*, "The Doctrine of Being" [*Die Lehre vom Sein*], Hegel's first step towards this goal is his twofold account of how the lexical elements that thought combines are limited and how the relations [*Beziehungen*] among such elements also have meaning or determinacy [*Bedeutung, Bestimmtheit*]. In Book II of the *Logic*, Hegel takes up into his account of actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] the varieties of limitedness that he outlined in Book I. These forms of limitedness figure prominently in Hegel's anti-essentialist notions of historical actuality and conceiving.

In the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel explains limitation in this way: "[c]onsciousness is explicitly the conceiving of itself. Hence consciousness posits its singularity [*Einzelheit*] as the very going-beyond of its limits [*Beschränkte*] (since these limits are its own)".²² Here, the primary feature of the operative [*wirkliche*] power of the mind [*der Geist*], the very substance of its singularity [*Einzelheit*], is the transgression, or sublation [*Aufhebung*], of its limits in acts of conceiving. In my reading, the primary goal [*Ziel*] of the *Logic* as a whole is to account for this operation of transgression, or self-exceeding, that is at the core of conceiving (grasping).

In Book I, Hegel defines the categories of beings (including becoming and the three varieties of limitedness). Book II concerns the relations among beings. The three types of limit are finitude [*Endlichkeit*], boundary [*Grenze*], and restriction [*Schranke*]. His use of these varieties of limit lays the groundwork for understanding what it might mean for finite conceiving to be linguistic in form and content.

The first form of limit that Hegel defines in Book I is simply to be finite [*Endlich*] or to have a limited temporal duration. A finite being will, at some time, cease to be. Hegel distinguishes this finitude [*Endlichkeit*] from a second kind limit [*Grenze*], which is a boundary that a being has by virtue of its relations to other beings that it, in turn, limits. For example, the border between France and Germany is a *Grenze*; it marks the point where one nation ceases to be and is limited by the very being of another nation. France is distinguished from Germany not only geographically but, also, conceptually by virtue of diverse languages, cultures, and histories. Hence, a *Grenze* can also be temporal. Dusk, for example, is a temporal limit [*Grenze*] between late afternoon and evening. This last example is not a case of finitude [*Endlichkeit*], because a limited temporal duration is not, itself, a relation to other limited beings or limited by those beings. A limited temporal extension is not defined as a relation between beings that are each defined by their temporal limitation of each other (as a *Grenze* is).

However, a *Grenze* can be finite [*Endlich*]. For example, the length or location of borders between countries can change after a war, or betrayal in a friendship can change the types of disclosure possible in that friendship. Finite beings are thus limited not only by a finite duration and by having boundaries [*Grenze*] to other finite [*Endlich*] beings but, also, by those boundaries themselves being finite or limited in duration.²³ In this way, Hegel takes up finitude into the category of boundary. This movement does not redefine finitude, but, rather, it shows how a being or a relation can be overdetermined by more than one type of limit, which now plays a different role when both determinacies [*Bestimmtheiten*, *Bedeutungen*] are present.

Hegel distinguishes these two ways of being limited from a third type, which he calls restriction [*Schranke*]. A being with restriction is limited by a relation to its “ought-to-be [*das Sollen*]”, that which it should be, but is not. *Das Sollen*, or “the ought”, is similar to a Platonic *eidos*, a being’s ideality or a Kantian “duty [*Pflegt*]”. A Platonic *eidos* is not limited by its instantiations or by being temporally finite. The idea of light, for example, is not limited by its instantiation in sunlight, moonlight, neon light, or incandescent light. These phenomena are all light by participating in the form [*eidos*] of light, although they are each limited by not being the ideal, Platonic form of light. Restriction is not defined in terms of a boundary relation [*Grenze*] to other beings. In this sense, the ought, or *das Sollen*, is conceptually distinct from any particular being just as is a Platonic *eidos* [εἶδος] or Kantian *Begriff* conceived as a rule.²⁴ Likewise, one can easily fail to fulfil what one acknowledges to be one’s Kantian, rational duty. Marcuse writes that a particular being stands in relation to “the ought”, in some particular way, and he compares Hegel’s *das Sollen* with the Platonic *to kalon* [τὸ καλὸν], the Platonic “idea of the good”.²⁵ A Platonic ideal limits a particular being by being its rational kernel, its perfection, in relation to which the particular being will always fall short. Although the ought does not, itself, define a temporal limit or a limit deriving from relations to other limited beings (because of its own timelessness and universality), beings with restriction are limited in these other ways, i.e. are finite and have boundaries as do all particulars.

Hegel’s central goal in Book I is to explicate the interrelations among types of limit and types of predication. For Hegel, the combining of limited meanings is a predicative, not merely ontological, relation by means of which a thought articulates itself.²⁶ This movement [*Bewegung*] of thought joins one determinacy or meaning [*Bestimmtheit*, *Bedeutung*] with another, yielding a relation [*Beziehung*] that Hegel argues “is there” and has meaning.²⁷ The priority of predication in the movement is key to Hegel’s general argument in the *Logic* that language does not confine language users within a scheme but provides the means of unlimited intellectual [*geistige*] expansion.

The argument that language consists of such a joining movement [*Bewegung*] is crucial for logic, and, thus, Hegel repeats this claim three times in Book I while describing three transitions. In the first instance, the joining movement takes up being and nothing into becoming [*Werden*]. Hegel writes that with the category of becoming, thought finds that “something else altogether appears before it”,²⁸ a relation [*Beziehung*] that is itself “full of content [*Inhaltsvolle*]”.²⁹ Hegel adds, at this point, that thought becomes aware of the interconnectedness [*Zusammenhang*] of beings and that the “genuine content [*wahrhafter Inhalt*]” of logic will henceforth be the determinacy, or meaningfulness of relations.³⁰ The second of three transitions results in Hegel’s discussion of the category of existence [*Dasein*], which begins his account of finitude [*Endlichkeit*]. Existence is the identity of coming-to-be and passing-away.³¹ Existence reveals that predicative joining is a self-relation within a determinacy, an “internal difference”.³² With the category of existence, Hegel also establishes that logical relations [*Beziehungen*] are internally limited movements and are, thus, limited in a way that is unlike finitude and boundary [*Grenze*], which involve external negation or limitation.³³

Hegel makes a subtle, yet significant, move with his account of the third transition, which features restriction [*Schranke*]. Similar to existence [*Dasein*], restriction [*Schranke*] bears its negation or limit within itself. Thus, the very concept of neon light has the *eidos* of “light” in a relation of sameness [*Gleichheit*] but not identity [*Identität*],³⁴ so that an internal ideality constitutes its very meaning. Hegel’s term “fulfilment [*Vollbringen*]” signifies restriction’s determination [*Bestimmtheit*, *Bedeutung*] by restriction’s own ideality or being-without-restriction and, thus, an orientation towards the elimination of its restriction [*Schranke*].³⁵ Restriction thus reveals that the very idea of a limited being is conceptually bound to its ceasing to be that limited being.³⁶ According to Stephen Houlgate, the role that Hegel gives to *das Sollen* (the normative ought, or Platonic *eidos*) shows that such an ideality “lacks real being”³⁷ of its own. Rather, ideality is only one moment in a self-related, determinate movement [*Bewegung*] of logical articulation, as that which strives towards being-without-restriction.

In Book I, Hegel thus establishes with his notion of predicative joining, that thought can overcome limitation (becoming infinite), since there are in principle no limits to the possibilities of future predicative combinations. George Di Giovanni writes that this transition to infinity in Book I introduces a fundamental change: “the conceptual stress is no longer on ‘what’ a being happens to be but on its retaining unity (on its abiding with itself) regardless of what it might otherwise be as a ‘what’”.³⁸ That is, the stress is now on a self-related determinacy’s movement in “abiding with itself” in and through linguistic articulation [*Entwicklung*].

This self-related movement is also the “the self-determination of being”.³⁹ In Book I, then, Hegel has shown that meaning [*Bedeutung, Bestimmung*] cannot be understood on the Platonic/Kantian model of an *eidos* or “rule” alone. He has shown that, since limitedness is taken up into predicative, linguistic articulation, it cannot be without material history. The predicative relation carries forms of material limit that “are there” in the meanings joined. Thus, before we begin to analyse Book II, we see Hegel’s initial steps towards showing the inadequacy of Kantian synthesis, which is merely a cognitive act, not a logically predicative one.

II

The pivot in Book I (from limitedness to the infinite possibilities of predication) reappears in Book II as a reflective movement from force and expression to actuality. Both transitions show the meaningfulness [*Bedeutung, Bestimmtheit*] of logical relations. However, in Book II, Hegel sharpens his discussion of relations, so that they are now mediated by thought’s self-relation (or thought’s awareness that its thoughts are its own thoughts). This brings a new type of meaning, which thought recognises as a product of its own activity and which Hegel calls actuality [*Wirklichkeit*].

Di Giovanni captures Hegel’s overall direction of thought in the translator’s introduction to Hegel’s *Logic*: logic moves from object to essence to concept.⁴⁰ Similarly, in the Introduction to his *Phenomenology*, Hegel writes that consciousness posits the in-itself of its object as an essence and approaches this essence in terms of a graspable concept [*Begriff*].⁴¹ The central book in the *Logic*, Book II, is entitled “The Doctrine of Essence [*Die Lehre vom Wesen*]”. “Essence” is that which is grasped in the act of conceiving in so far as it can be distinguished from that act. The term *Wesen* itself is taken from the past participle of the word for being [*Sein*], *gewesen*, which, since it signifies “has been”, embeds movement in its very grammatical tense. *Wesen* (essence) suggests the “timeless past” of the unchangeable Platonic *eidos* as well as the intelligent [*geistige*] movement of looking back upon essence in the moment of grasping it.

The category of actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] is vital to the centre of Hegel’s consideration of essence. The *Logic* shows that historical actuality (judgement) is the central act of cognitive mediation [*Vermittlung*], the essence of thought. We see the role of actuality, first, in seeing how thought takes up into itself diverse types of limitedness and, therefore, determinacy [*Bestimmtheit, Bedeutungen*]. Book II advances this progression by demonstrating thought’s power to grasp meaning by combining a diversity of grammatical elements and logical relations (with material limits). Book II shows that these relations are substantial modal relations [*Verhältnisse*].

Book II as a whole concerns thought's attempt to find some more fundamental basis for Being [*Sein*] than just its objective, unmediated form. Thought postulates the need for some basis of Being [*Sein*], an essence, which thought now posits as presupposed by and as resulting from, its own mediation of that being. Essence is thus the "result" of thought penetrating being and finding there something that excludes all finiteness. Marcuse argues that this initial move in Book II is the central operation of Hegelian logic: thought's division of itself into thought and being – a division that thought's activity then seeks to resolve.⁴²

Book II's movement from this originary division [*ur-teil*] to the articulation of the determinacies (meanings) of this division is the opposite of Kantian reason; rather than dividing, Kantian reason begins with division and seeks a synthesis of the diverse faculties of passive sensibility and active judgement. Unlike Kant, Hegel instead distinguishes an essence from its mediation by thought and shows the increasing determinacy or meaningfulness of this division. He ultimately shows that essence is actuality and that the striving of restriction [*Schranke*] to be without limit (a Platonic erotic striving) locates essence or *eidos* in potentiality unlimited connections [*Beziehungen*] (as we saw in Section I).

In Book I, the relations were transitions [*Übergangen*] from category to category, from a being to a being. In Book II, Hegel develops the notion that relations are posited as determinate [*Bestimmt*] by being reflectively mediated for-thought by thought's self-relation (and are known to belong to thought). Initially, the distinction of essence from the inessential locates the inessential as an illusory show of determinateness or meaning. Twentieth-century post-Hegelians often derive arbitrariness of the sign from Hegel's view that the material intuition of a sign (a show [*Schein*]) refers to its meaning (signified) in an inessential way.⁴³ This inessentiality of the signified is the groundwork of Book II, which, as it develops, increasingly establishes meaning to be heterogeneously composed from contingent, differentiated material and ideal lexical elements.

The central portion of Book II is devoted to the coming-to-be of thought's own act (which is now known to be such). The problem that Hegel is trying to solve (with the category of reflection) arises from the Kantian view that the understanding's concepts are active, not receptive ("wholly active, in no way passive"⁴⁴). For Kant, these concepts resemble normative rules that are applied to a passive sense content: as Robert Pippin writes, the concept "'serves' as a rule".⁴⁵ According to Pippin, this way of describing the role of concepts makes it difficult to see how they can have an empirical origin, which leaves mysterious the ground of such rules and their application in constituting sense experience.⁴⁶ Hence, Kant gets no further than Plato in conceiving of form, or concept, as a

rule-based ideality (or function) removed from sense rather than integrated with it.

Hegel aims to avoid this pitfall by rethinking the very idea of content in terms of both sensuous and ideal elements of language (rather than just the “deliverances of sensibility”). Kant considers the active element that uses concepts to be the judgement, but the form and content that are unified by judgement are (for him) intuited by different faculties [*Vermögen*]. Thus, one aim of Hegel’s Book II is to replace the Kantian opposition between form and content with a conceptual differentiation in which form and content are adequate to, and integrated with, each other. Hegel’s first step is to replace the Kantian dichotomy between noumena and phenomena (appearance [*Erscheinung*]) with the outward movement from force to expression.

Hegel begins with categories that are analogous to Kantian concepts in order to trace the reversal and internalisation of thought’s inner and outer logical relations. First, he distinguishes “concrete existence [*Existenz*]” from its phenomenal appearance [*Erscheinung*]. *Existenz* is similar to the Kantian noumenon since thought projects it as underlying phenomena [*Erscheinungen*]. Hegel defines appearance as “the reflection of concrete existence in otherness [*in das Anderssein reflektierte*]”.⁴⁷ The appearance shows itself to thought in some way or, as Hegel writes, has its essential [*wesentliche*] stable independence only in an other.⁴⁸ Hegel argues that appearance as a relation thus has two sides: thought posits appearance as a relation or connection [*Beziehung*] between an inner and an outer, both of which are transitory references [*Bedeutung, Bestimmung*].⁴⁹ This relation is both a dissolution and a self-identity of the two sides and, as such, is a substantial relation [*Verhältnis*], since the two sides internalise each other.⁵⁰

Hegel reframes the Kantian distinction between concrete existence (noumena) and appearance at a higher level; in doing so, he rearticulates Book II’s initial division [*ur-teil*] between the essential and the inessential by arguing that this new form of the inessential (appearance) is mediated by double references to both its noumenal essence, *Existenz*, and thought by which its appearance [*Erscheinung*] is mediated. So, Book II’s concrete existence [*Existenz*] differs from Book I’s existence [*Dasein*]: although both are transient relations, noumenal *Existenz* is mediated by appearance while *Dasein*, by contrast, is the unmediatable identity of coming-to-be and passing-away. Further, Hegel changes Kantian discursive sensibility [*Sinnlichkeit*] by attributing dual inner-outer references to appearance [*Erscheinung*], which he considers to be a logical (not sensible) category.

For Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the deliverances of sensibility, sensible properties, “must always be *established* [as determinate or as represented] by the understanding in judgement,”⁵¹ and thus cannot

be considered as in-themselves complex prior to the understanding's representation of them.⁵² For Kant, reason has a substantial relation [*Verhältnis*] to sensible intuition [*Anschauung*]⁵³ that derives from its own attribution of complexity to the intuited content. However, Hegel understands complexity in the terms already established by the categories of limitedness in Book I (which result in unlimited predicative possibility). Thus, his transformation of *Existenz* and appearance into force and expression depends upon his understanding of this complexity.

Hegel derives the category of actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] once concrete existence [*Existenz*] and appearance [*Erscheinung*] are sublated [*Aufgehoben*] (and elevated) by force [*Kraft*] and its expression [*Äussurung*]. This transition echoes Book I's transition from restriction to being-without-restriction because it, too, shows that linguistic determinacy [*Bedeutung, Bestimmtheit*] harbours an erotic striving for completion [*Vollendung*] without limitation (just as restriction strives to be without restriction). Hegel attributes bidirectional inner-outer references to expression, just as he has done for appearance. However, now Hegel shows that, in expression, a unified power [*Kraft*] externalises itself and is "reflected into itself" as an expressive power (known to itself as such) that meets an external limit.⁵⁴ In other words, force [*Kraft*] is actualised in linguistic expression, which is reflected in otherness (just as Aristotelian form requires actualisation in matter [ὕλη]). The expression's receptive medium embodies a reversal for-thought, in which the force becomes objective for-itself by reaching its limit. The category of appearance already had both inner and outer references, but with expression the inner-outer relation is no longer a unified opposition; it has meaning as a reflective, substantial relation [*Verhältnis*] that needs a receptive medium for its reversal in actualisation.

This transition in the *Logic* is analogous to two transitions in the *Phenomenology*. H.S. Harris describes a similar transition in the *Phenomenology* from perception (the focus of Chapter 2 of the *Phenomenology*) to force and expression (the focus of Chapter 3). Harris writes, "The Self is now the force that expresses itself in the Other as a receptive medium".⁵⁵ Hegel's transition in the *Phenomenology* from force and expression (in Chapter 3), to self-consciousness and desire (in Chapter 4), introduces an analogous reversal. Consciousness becomes *self-consciousness* by being "reflected into itself" as force [*Kraft*] via expression; consciousness returns into itself by being mediated by another self-consciousness, which either resists or succumbs to a demand for recognition. As Harris puts it, with this transition there is a "change in the significance of Being [*Sein*]"'.⁵⁶ Self-consciousness is now "at home in the world"⁵⁷ because "this *logical* life is just the 'freedom' of the consciousness that makes itself into a circle from Force postulated to Force comprehended".⁵⁸ Thought's return-into-self from an outward expression, together with both the inward and outward references [*Bedeutung, Bestimmtheit*] (i.e. with the

thought of these references as its “own act [*eigenes Tun*]”,⁵⁹ composes the logical category of actuality.⁶⁰

Actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] is a self-reflective or regulative movement of combining not only grammatical components but also inner and outer logical relations. Actuality thus shifts reason’s power from a Kantian framework, in which some content is hidden (e.g. the noumena), to a form of judgement that combines and reverses logical relations and lexical elements; once combined, these items give rise to a communicative possibility that, while it looks towards the comprehension of another, “could have been otherwise”.⁶¹ For Hegel, then, the articulation of thought’s actuality, like its antecedents (appearance and expression), requires a combination of the *diverse*.⁶² Thus, thought’s content [*Inhalt*] is at once restful and restless (with only a negative relation to any law-like domain).⁶³ Hegel regards the “parts [*Teile*]” of such combinations as linguistic components. His use of the part/whole relationship is illuminated by Eric Watkins, according to whom, a conceptual whole, while itself “unconditioned”, is composed of simples that all mutually condition one another.⁶⁴ Similarly, for Hegel, the heterogeneous lexical elements that constitute actuality mutually condition each other.

The interactions and dependencies of these diverse components of meaning are illuminated by the interactions of perceptual modalities described by Mohan Matthen. He reports that when “subjects look *and* listen to a speaker they are much faster and make far fewer errors of identification than when each [sensory] modality is unassisted by the other”.⁶⁵ Matthen also writes, “flavor experiences have components contributed by touch, smell, and taste” even though the taste is usually attributed to the food item itself by the person who tastes it.⁶⁶ Hegel takes thought’s content and expression to involve a similarly complex interplay among its elements [*Bestimmtheit*]. In both cases, the content is heterogeneously composed of different sensory and logical modalities as well as conventional and symbolic forms of reference [*Bedeutung*] that signify differently but that mutually condition each other in a single expression.

Given the more opaque mimetic signifying properties of symbolism, Hegel cannot subordinate symbolic signification to the arbitrariness and transparency of the sign, although he is frequently interpreted this way.⁶⁷ Kathleen Dow Magnus shows, rather, that Hegel distinguishes between sign and symbol regarding the way in which meaning and expression are related to each.⁶⁸ For both the sign and the symbol, meaning [*Bedeutung*] and expression [*Ausdruck*] are distinct. Sign and symbol are distinguished, however, because, in the case of the sign, meaning and (sensuous) expression are arbitrarily identified, but in that of the symbol, meaning is *both* identical to and different from what it represents. For instance, a balanced pair of scales visually suggests the balancing that should obtain in what is meant by “justice”. Thought combines mutually mediating

lexical elements, and such combinations typically will include symbolic associations as well as conventional ones.

If such mediation does involve symbolic meaning (e.g. the symbolic meaning of the colour green), then access to thought's own intention might be inaccessible to an interlocutor whose orientation is entirely conventional and who is, thus, unfamiliar with symbolic references [*Bedeutungen, Bestimmtheit*]. For instance, if symbolic associations of the colour green figure in an expressed actuality, the content will to that extent be inaccessible to someone who is restricted to conventional associations (e.g. who knows nothing of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*).⁶⁹ Thought's inaccessibility to one whose linguistic orientation tends to be more conventional, as opposed to symbolic, suggests that thought cannot be exclusively "bounded by" social convention and practical agreement.

III

The previous two sections have shown that actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] is not determinative (e.g. an application of a "universal" concept to a particular). Actuality is instead similar to a Kantian regulative judgement in the *Critique of Judgement*. Kant's regulative judgement cannot determinately attribute to the object any actual or possible modality. In a Kantian regulative judgement, logical modalities must be aspects of thought's own concept and not of the object.⁷⁰ Such a judgement involves the imaginative projection of one's own judgement as bound up in a universality that escapes one's own grasp, since it is "in concert" with others,⁷¹ "as if" there were to be such general agreement.⁷² For Hegel, language requires similar projected agreement, consisting of a joining movement [*Bewegung*] that combines diverse predicative relations. As we saw, in Book I, Hegel uses his notion of predicative joining to show that there are in principle no limits to the possibilities of future predicative combinations.

Actuality is mediated for thought by thought's self-relation and by logical relations of inner and outer possibility as well as symbolic and analogical associations. In Hegel's logic, the grammatical and other components (tenses, declensions, shapes of ink marks, patterns of sound, syntax, ideas) reciprocally condition each other, but the combination of these elements can be only hypothetically complete (or perfect) since they remain open to possible, anticipated comprehension of another. Further, this limited meaning, generated by the stance of actuality, is the result of a striving to be unlimited, or without Platonic/Kantian normative binding (which "lacks real being").⁷³

As Marcuse recognises, the closest precedent for Hegelian actuality as a type of form is Aristotelian *energeia*.⁷⁴ Aristotelian *energeia* qualifies as "form" as both origin and end (*arche* and *telos*), of an inwardly moving being.⁷⁵ Thus conceived (in terms of *energeia*), the double movement of essence is illustrated by Benjamin's metaphors in the "Epistemo-Critical

Prologue” to the *Origin of German Tragic Drama* (his “*Trauerspiel* book” on the Baroque “sorrow play”).⁷⁶ In an apparent nod to Hegel’s logic, Benjamin draws upon *Eros* [ἔρως] in Plato’s *Symposium*⁷⁷ placing Being [*Sein*] and Concept [*Begriff*] at extreme ends of a spectrum (as does Hegel in the *Logic*). Like Hegel, Benjamin locates “Essence [*Wesen*]” between these extremes. Benjamin figures essence metaphorically as a “constellation”.⁷⁸ He writes that while being has truth and concepts have coherence, the essential content [*Wesenheit*] of an idea is a constellation of great diversity. For Benjamin and Hegel, essence embodies a reversal, resolving the opposed references to origin and result (truth and coherence). So conceived, essence is both presupposition and result (*arche* [ἀρχή] and *telos* [τέλος]) of thought’s being stimulated [*ertreibt*] to take up the content determinations [*Bestimmungen*] by thought’s own means [*Entwicklung von sich aus*].⁷⁹

The double movement [*Bewegung*] of essence in the form of Hegelian actuality joins truth and coherence as thought strives to achieve [*vollbringe*] a resolution “true satisfaction [*gewährten Befriedigung*]” in a meaningful “constellation”. In this endeavour, thought looks “toward” and yet is “subsequent to” the meaning [*Bestimmtheit, Bedeutung*].⁸⁰ Benjamin uses the German term *Auflösung* (i.e., “disentanglement”, “solution”, or “dissolution”) for the movement towards an essential content when it is figured as “salvation” or “paradise”.⁸¹ Mixing metaphors, he writes that the inauthentic, buried depths of the unredeemed and ruined world without end (or meaning) are saved and reanimated by time’s fulfillment in the promise of stasis, just as a constellation is a place of crystallised intelligibility set against the vast, boundaryless, starry sky.

In this way, thought under the aspect of historical actuality faces a hypothetical coincidence of truth and coherence. The logical location of this “essence” (within the heterogenous composition of thought’s content) is a postulated “if” that defies an assignment of truth value in the way categorical property ascriptions are traditionally understood⁸² (as evident in the German term essence [*Wesen*], which has a grammatical reference to the past participle of Being [*Sein*], *gewesen*, yet nevertheless exposes thought to content that is believed and, thereby, has a futural reference).

In Chapter 7 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, on forms of religious life, Hegel argues that conceptual fulfilment begins with belief [*Glaube*], or a thought [*Gedanke*] that is not yet comprehended by a concept [*seinen Inhalt ohne den Begriff*].⁸³ The first form of religious life that Hegel considers is the unmediated identity of God with light (which, for Hegel, falls under the category of “natural religion”).⁸⁴ In Chapter 7, Hegel traces the development of religion through several forms, including art-religion, intellectual or minded art [*Das geistige Kunstwerk*], and revealed religion.⁸⁵ Hegel’s account of the forms of religious life locates the primitive instance in unmediated, unarticulated belief, which turns on the immediate, unarticulated

identification of light with God. Accordingly, I contend that this moment of pure belief reflects a condition for all linguistic articulation. To communicate, thought needs a directedness “toward-the-possibility of” a postulated, reflective identity of truth (in the content of belief) and coherence (e.g. that of aesthetic composition).

Unarticulated belief is without power or necessity since it lacks the sought-after integration of purposiveness with form and content (that would yield the articulation of a concept). Hegel thus conceives (at the centre of the *Logic*) of actuality on the model of Aristotelian *energeia*, a true Romantic moment of living incompleteness (an essential “not yet”). Actuality embodies the Romantic resistance to a completed idealism of idealism itself⁸⁶ in the form of a dissolving and resolving auto-constitution that has not been articulated in a concept. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy contend that “[t]he paradox, here, seems to consist in seeing the artistic protest against religion carried out in the name of the unveiling of the goddess – truth – that unveiling which philosophy, precisely, from Kant to Hegel, will continuously and stubbornly hold up *against* the aesthetic . . . against romanticism itself”.⁸⁷ This believed unity is paradoxical, since thought both presupposes and creates it in the form of a postulated identity (or, echoing Benjamin, essence as dissolution or salvation) – which serves as the primary instance of meaning in Hegel’s and Wittgenstein’s terms and is thus required for communicability.⁸⁸

Hegel argues that historical actuality is “bound to sensuousness”⁸⁹ since it combines like all aesthetic experience the phenomenal elements of language with ideal references and logical relations. Meaning no longer derives exclusively from correspondence with the world but from “operations” and “non-representational organisation”⁹⁰ that alter any anchoring in naturalised experience.⁹¹ For instance, the combining movement of conceiving may evoke symbolic or analogical references as well as conventional ones, or even references that are apt to displace conventional associations by means of disruptive or contradictory forms of symbolic association (as in poetic language⁹²).

In this regard, Hegel’s logic places language as potentially available to diverse normative kinds of reference (e.g. analogical, aesthetic, symbolic, conventional) while disavowing any role for an overarching conceptual scheme. Hegel’s historical actuality is thus a complex linguistic responsiveness that cannot be severed from relations to others. Expressions are transformed as they are interpreted,⁹³ in a dynamic suggested by the Greek term *Eros* and the German term *Streben*, “a reaching out to be determined [*bestimmt*] by”.⁹⁴ In this sense, belief is the secret Romantic truth of Fichte,⁹⁵ a striving for self-coincidence that cannot be wrong.⁹⁶ Such incompleteness implies, as Theresa Kelley writes, “the irreconcilability of certain arguments . . . singularity, chance, and contingency become the work of the day. . . . [Romantic] friction is always about several discordant possibilities”.⁹⁷

Actuality is an operation of combining, reversing, and balancing possible predicative relations that thereby become substantial relations [*Verhältnisse*], since they are mediated by thought's self-relation. The form of the relevant sounds and ink marks retains a trace of Kantian intuited appearance [*Erscheinung*]; these material items now require a self-mediated relation to an other for their meaning. The material elements (sounds, ink marks, colours, tones), according to Hegel, are taken up by thought into actuality and might thus include references to the symbolic meanings of particular colours, tones, and associations, which are not conventions. Form is no longer separable or distinguishable from content; it is adequate to the content since it *is* a composite of the heterogeneous content.

Kant's notion of appearance [*Erscheinung*] is informed by the empirical categories of Kant's understanding. When sensuous intuition is no longer defined primarily by cause and effect or law-like regularity, the categories that make Kantian appearance incompatible with infinity disappear.⁹⁸ Thus, for Hegel, the Kantian antinomy of finite and the infinite no longer applies to the logical form that the phenomenal takes. Content is no longer defined by being either within-the-scope or beyond-the-limits of pure reason as it was for Kant;⁹⁹ thus, cognition has no limits in advance.¹⁰⁰ Since meaning is of necessity heterogeneously composed, with an anticipatory temporal and spatial location (because signification is materially historical), it cannot be reduced to any kind of formality. Hegel integrates a new notion of phenomenal sensuousness into the very flesh [*Leib*] of the mind [*der Geist*].

In conclusion, Hegel's philosophy of language in the *Science of Logic* lends itself to emancipatory politics. This facet of the *Logic* is rooted in the reflective category of actuality [*Wirklichkeit*], which, as Marcuse recognises, is the active centre of Hegel's logic. In her Introduction to Marcuse's book *Hegel's Ontology and Theory of Historicity*, Seyla Benhabib writes that "Marcuse will choose to handle the problem of Marxism and philosophy differently by showing how 'philosophy by itself' . . . moves toward an actualisation which sublates it [*verwirkliche Aufhebung*]" .¹⁰¹ In his category of actuality (or actualisation), Hegel transposes "essence" into a non-essentialist framework centred on an inherently emancipatory movement [*Bewegung*] of meaning-production (in marked juxtaposition to a static Platonic *eidos*). I have invoked both Platonic *Eros* and Aristotelian *energeia* to expand upon Marcuse's treatment of Hegelian essence.

For Hegel, these ancient Greek forces are combined in a category of mental activity [*geistige Tätigkeit*], which is distinguished by thought's power to relate itself erotically to its own principle of movement in language. Thought combines lexical elements reflexively (including indifferent or distinguishable determinacies [*Bestimmungen*] and senses [*Sinne*]), which become objectively accessible for thought only by operating together towards an end [*Ziel*].¹⁰² I have argued that the "primary

instance” of language use has in view this end, which rests on the convergence of genuine belief and expectation¹⁰³ in (to use Benjamin’s metaphor) a “constellation”.

The constellation appears against the background of the boundless sky. The sky symbolises the infinity of both the universe and language.¹⁰⁴ A constellation is a metaphorical embodiment of thought’s reversal, a logico-religious moment (and erotic revelation¹⁰⁵ and self-cancelation¹⁰⁶) in which thought, while being oriented towards a specific interlocutor’s power to comprehend, has yet to achieve dominance over any conceptual content. Thought’s actuality (*energeia*) thus brings one to the essence of *poesis* [ποίησις], a subjective principle of self-apprehension which is, for Hegel, pure intelligent activity [*Geistigkeit*].¹⁰⁷ In poetry, as in actuality [*Wirklichkeit*], the mind holds together the extremes of immediacy and diversity and gives to them an inward shape in subject matter [*geistige Gehalt ein äusserlich Dasein gewinnt*] without proceeding to an external shape.¹⁰⁸ A “constellation” suggests the object of erotic striving (in the Platonic sense), a focus that, like Hegelian actuality, joins together opposed references [*Bestimmungen, Bedeutungen*] to truth (being) and coherence (concept), that is, to the beginning and the end of Hegel’s *Logic*. Actuality is thought’s immediate belief (itself an inner-outer relation) that another will comprehend motivated by an intelligent [*geistige*] unity of truth and coherence and that bears an *individual* substantial relation [*Verhältnis*] to its own actualisation.

In his “Political Preface” to a later edition of his *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse asks: “Can we speak of a juncture between the erotic and the political dimension?”¹⁰⁹ In this preface, he refers to self-contradictory social pathologies of the times¹¹⁰ and criticises Romanticism for overvaluing the positive aspect of the world’s liberation movements.¹¹¹ In the Introduction to an earlier edition of the book, Marcuse had criticised the practice of psychoanalysis for seeming to forget Freud’s original intention to elucidate obscurities by showing the possibilities of as yet unknown connections.¹¹² He also writes that Kant’s innovation in the *Critique of Judgement* was not to replace pure reason with aesthetics but, rather, to show the movement at the centre of the mind by which nature becomes susceptible to freedom and which cannot, itself, be the content of mere sense perception.¹¹³

The movement of language towards its own actualisation (believing) builds clarity while dismantling and superseding old forms of articulation. Thought’s combining and mediating power is a movement of becoming, an activity from which knowledge *emerges* in the Aristotelian sense of *genomai* [γίνομαι] (know, become, appear in history)¹¹⁴ and which, itself, issues from a movement similar to *poietikon*, an auto-production of Aristotle’s *psyche* [ψυχή].¹¹⁵ Hegelian essence is thus marked by the material unrepeatability of historical locations, since the end [*Ziel*] of meaning [*Bedeutung, Bestimmtheit*] is in each case a particular, context-bound

utterance's tractability for the other. John McCumber writes that, for Wittgenstein, the significance of a word relies on its connections with other words (among other things), and that the grouping and regrouping of such connections is an inherently fragmentary practice.¹¹⁶ McCumber writes, "Each speaker modifies language games as the occasion demands in contextually bound circumstances with a view to the comprehension of another".¹¹⁷

McCumber argues that Hegel pre-empts Wittgenstein in his insights into language's historicity. Wittgenstein's therapeutic method sought to dissolve timeless essences by examining the diverse particularities of historically situated and attuned language games.¹¹⁸ But Hegel had already shown the essential temporality of language. For him, language's operativity (e.g. reason as "cause") is the active principle of concepts and, thus, an entirely different type of cause than mechanistic causality. Hegel's logic thus reveals the resistance of language to formality in its very composition. The *Logic* avoids the trap of modernism, which features an "ideology of endless newness and guaranteed progress"¹¹⁹ or a "drive to incessant novelty".¹²⁰ Rather, Hegel shows that the effective power of language lies the intertwining of heterogeneous material lexical elements and the anticipation of possible connections among concepts. In this sense, Hegel's essence-as-*energeia* is a decisive "break from all naturalness"¹²¹ and a "revelation of the Absolute [or substantial relation (*Verhältnis*)] absent from all form".¹²² Walter Benjamin recognises that this intertwining is evident only in the human-made material constructions and utterances that surround us.

The space of language that Hegel charts in the *Science of Logic* is profoundly modern and intensely political. Hegel anticipated the "terrible discovery of self-defeating modernity" that would follow from the arbitrariness of the sign and that has precipitated the dominance of technical rationality.¹²³ Modern subjects are often less apt to identify with any source of meaning, whether it be Enlightenment rationality and autonomy, a pre-modern cosmic order featuring creaturely guilt, or a Nietzschean will to power. For Susan Sontag, we find this modern hesitancy most vividly embodied in the slowness of Walter Benjamin's saturnine temperament, especially in his need for solitude amid the great metropolis, and his being forever at home in a labyrinth (an archive), a place where one gets lost. For the saturnine individual, "space is broad, teeming with possibilities, positions, intersections, passages, detours, U-Turns, dead ends, [and] one-way streets".¹²⁴ Benjamin's attraction to the material form and multiplicity of historical actuality is evident especially in his unfinished *Arcades Project*.

This document shows Benjamin's method of sorting through the intertwining of situated particularities with linguistic determinacy [*Bestimmtheit*] in the expanse of an archive. The method involves collating the remnants of material life and language from early industrialism, one by

one on page after page. “There are a great many of these glass-covered walkways . . . rows of glittering shops”, as Benjamin transcribes from Eduard Devrient’s *Letters from Paris Berlin* [sic].¹²⁵ Some pages later, Benjamin attends to the following observation, which is drawn from an interview of M. Martin by A. Durand: “In 1798 and 1799, the Egyptian campaign lent frightful importance to the fashion for shawls”.¹²⁶ Benjamin also observes: “On Baudelaire’s ‘religious intoxication of great cities’: the department stores are temples consecrated to this intoxication”.¹²⁷ In his ponderous documentary method, not only is it necessary that “meaning adhere to things” materially¹²⁸ (as in sounds, tones, ink marks, created objects) but that there should be “no discernible unity”.¹²⁹

Irving Wohlfarth writes that, for Benjamin, historical actuality is “the measure of the possible”, which is the unrepeatable “heart of the present”.¹³⁰ This moment of pure immediate mental activity [*geistige Tätigkeit*], or *poiesis* [ποίησις], for-itself is possible because Hegel’s logic affords potentially unlimited predicative connections. As a result, no object of thought can, by itself, serve as a foundation for thought.¹³¹ The true Romantic moment (Benjamin’s “active reality”¹³²) is the logically reflective beginning point (or motivating moment) for political recasting, such as that envisioned in the feminist world-building strategies of Nöelle McAfee and Linda M. G. Zerilli.¹³³ Like McAfee’s and Zerilli’s feminism, Hegelian logic is oriented towards “renewing, and expanding the network of tangible and intangible relations”.¹³⁴ Actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] embodies an erotic striving to “[rewrite] the rules of the possible”¹³⁵ and be free from current limits,¹³⁶ thereby enlarging our “sense of worldly reality”. Hegelian actuality, located at the centre of the *Logic* (at the centre of thought) is thought’s power as anticipatory self-movement [*Bewegtheit*] and self-knowing incompleteness.

Notes

1. Marcuse (1987: 42–43); see also Timothy Bahti’s translation of the German noun *Wirkung* as “transient historical effect” (Bahti 1992: 277).
2. I derive this point from Marcuse (1987: 91). Marcuse’s *Hegel’s Ontology* is his never-defended *Habilitationsschrift* written under the supervision of Martin Heidegger, first published in German in 1932. In this book, Marcuse attempts to create a Hegelian “fundamental ontology of Being” by substituting the category of motility [*Bewegtheit*] for Heidegger’s “Being” [*Sein*] in *Being and Time*. With motility, Marcuse combines Aristotle’s *energeia* and Hegel’s actuality [*Wirklichkeit*]. Marcuse thus refashions Heideggerian Being into a conception of thought’s horizon that is essentially animated by activity and movement. My interpretation of Hegel’s category of actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] draws upon, but differs from, Marcuse’s by virtue of my focus on actuality’s heterogeneous composition and its derivation from Kantian reflective judgement (referencing updated Kant scholarship from Robert Pippin, to which Marcuse did not have access).
3. Aristotle (1986: II.ii.414a10–414a14).

4. PG525/PS487 [VIII].
5. Burbidge (1993: 86–101).
6. Dahlstrom (1983: 35).
7. Marcuse (1987: 125–126).
8. Ibid., p. 35.
9. Jardine (1985: 24, 42, 2015: 3–4).
10. Ibid., pp. 25, 44. Alice Jardine writes: “*Gynesis* – from the Greek *gyn* [γυνή] – signifying woman and *-sis* [-σις] designating process – is the word I invented some time ago to designate the process of putting into discourse and indeed valorising the feminine” (Jardine 2015: 4).
11. Jardine (1985: 47).
12. Ibid., p. 90.
13. Deligiorgi (2006: 6).
14. Barnard and Lester (1988: xii).
15. Ibid.
16. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1988: 42–47).
17. Ibid., pp. 48–49, 57.
18. WL 2:190/SL468.
19. Benjamin (2011: 102). See also the work of Simon Lumsden, who similarly argues that Hegel is not to be identified with this form of Romanticism (Lumsden 2014: 5–7, 69–70).
20. Benjamin (2011: 103); Rebecca Comay identifies three different conceptions of Romanticism in Benjamin’s early writings, the primary one of which is an “active reality” (Comay 2004: 138).
21. Benjamin (2011: 103) (Benjamin’s italics).
22. PG63/PS51 (translation altered).
23. WL 1:136/SL90–103.
24. WL 1:147/SL103–8.
25. Marcuse (1987: 129).
26. Deligiorgi (2002: 68); Redding (2016a: 2); Redding (2016b: 369).
27. WL 1:139/SL80–81. See also Kristeva (1980: 124–147).
28. EPW 1/EL §88.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. WL 1:112/SL80.
32. Redding (2016b: 369).
33. WL 1:140–1/SL98–100.
34. See Heidegger’s discussion of this distinction (Heidegger 1969: 25, 69).
35. WL 1:145–8/SL104–5.
36. Houlgate (2006: 392).
37. Ibid., p. 393.
38. di Giovanni (2010a: xxxix).
39. Houlgate (2006: 45).
40. di Giovanni (2010a: xxxvii).
41. PG65/PS53.
42. Marcuse (1987: 35, 61–62, 127).
43. EPW 1/EL §112Z; Russon (1997: 161, 66f); Derrida (1978).
44. Pippin 1982: 122.
45. Ibid., p. 108.
46. Ibid., p. 120.
47. WL 2:125/SL438.
48. WL 2:151/SL440.
49. WL 2:149/SL438.

50. WL 2:149/SL440.
51. Pippin (1982: 33, 49–50) (Pippin’s emphasis).
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 43–44.
53. KRV 1:302/CPR A285/B341.
54. Julia Kristeva accounts for this limit in semiotic and psychoanalytic terms: the limit [*réalité*] that assertion reaches is composed of “scissions, impulses, collisions, rejections” (Kristeva [1974] 1984: 107, 116).
55. Harris (1997: 317).
56. *Ibid.*, p. 323.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 318.
58. *Ibid.*
59. WL 2:190/SL468.
60. di Giovanni (2010b: lxviii). The distinction that Hegel draws between the German terms *Verhältnis* and *Beziehung* is the turning point of the *Logic*. George Di Giovanni writes, “this distinction is conceptually very important and crucial to the development of the *Logic*”. *Beziehung* applies to terms that are interrelated externally and reflectively. *Verhältnis* applies to the relation of substantiality [*Das Verhältnis der Substantialität*]. This change in the type of logical relation mediated by thought occurs with the transition from force and expression to actuality in Book II. Di Giovanni emphasises that thought is actual for-itself as the substantial relation [*Verhältnis*] of expressing.
61. Burbidge (1980: 210).
62. WL 2:511/SL707.
63. WL 2:154/SL442.
64. Watkins (2016: 122). The term “unconditioned” is *Unbedingt* in German, which means, more literally, “not dependent”. In this sense, Watkins is arguing that, for Kant, a concept is, as a whole, not dependent but, insofar as it can be divided into simples, is dependent upon these simples.
65. Matthen (2015: 576–577).
66. *Ibid.*, p. 579.
67. See Derrida (1972), Hyppolite (1997: 31).
68. Magnus (2001: 42).
69. See also Leonard Lawlor’s translation of the German *Bedeutung* as “want to say”, which includes a reference to anticipation. Derrida translates the German *Bedeutung* with the French *vouloir dire*, which Lawlor translates as “want to say” (Lawlor 2011: xxxi–xxxii).
70. KU §76.
71. Zerilli (2016: 63).
72. KU §76.
73. See also Jackson (1998). Frank Jackson distinguishes empirical, “physicalist” analysis from conceptual analysis and argues that some uses of linguistic terms require a conceptual analysis that is irreducible to empirical analysis, i.e. an asserted fit between physical properties and psychological properties is conceptual even if it entails such a fit (Jackson 1998: 62, 68). However, he also argues that two entities that are identical in their physical composition cannot differ in their physical and metaphysical necessity (e.g. two instantiations of H₂O) might still have different conceptual properties in different possible worlds and that such conceptual properties are contingent (Jackson 1998: 85–86). This conceptual, not metaphysical, possibility is therefore not physically reductive (does not supervene on physical properties) (Jackson 1998: 50–51). Jackson’s arguments are rooted in his distinction between metaphysical/logical and conceptual possibility. In the former, possibilities can only be necessary – the “necessary *a posteriori*”; in the latter, possibilities

- might be contingent (Jackson 1998: 85–86). As we will see, futural non-reductive possibility is key to Hegelian actuality. My chapter is not focused on Hegel’s concept [*der Begriff*], which Hegel fully develops in Book III of the *Science of Logic*. Rather, I am here concerned with the modal preconditions for the movement of conceiving [*begreifen*] that lie in judgement or historical actuality [*Wirklichkeit*], which, for Hegel, is the “essence of essence” (Houlgate 2006: 392–393). See also Williams (1998: 119).
74. Marcuse (1987: 42).
 75. Aristotle (1986: 412b14); Marcuse (1987: 74–77, 90–91, 105–107, 111–112).
 76. Benjamin’s *Trauerspiel* was rejected as a *Habilitationsschrift* from University of Frankfurt in 1925.
 77. Benjamin (1974, 1998: 12, 31).
 78. *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 34.
 79. EPW 1/EL §12 (Hegel’s emphasis).
 80. The senses of the German preposition “*nach*” or the English preposition “after”.
 81. Bahti (1992: 266–267).
 82. The *Tractarian* Wittgenstein claims that, although a false proposition signifies (or has meaning, *Bedeutung*), one cannot communicate by means of it. In commenting on this proposal, Anscombe writes that a true proposition (such as, “it is sunny today”) is a “primary instance” of usage that conforms to what language is “for” and, as such, conveys communicable content that is believed by the speaker. “There is no thing enunciated by a false proposition. . . . A true proposition tells one something if one believes it” (Anscombe 2016: 9–12). Both a Kantian hypothetical regulative judgement and Hegelian actuality are “primary instances” of meaning in this sense. They have the anticipatory form of a postulated “if there is to be communication” and require a hypothetical identity of truth and coherence. The statement must thus be believed by the speaker if the speaker anticipates communication.
 83. PG444/PS411 [VII].
 84. PG452/PS418 [VII.A.a].
 85. PG488/PS453 [VII.C].
 86. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1988: 64).
 87. *Ibid.*, p. 76 (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy’s emphasis).
 88. WL 2:570/SL751.
 89. Bernstein (2007: 234–237).
 90. Jardine (1985: 86).
 91. *Ibid.*, p. 42; WL 2:495/SL695, Stern (2016: 209).
 92. Kristeva (1974, 1984: 141–142, 155), Kristeva (1980: 71).
 93. Houlgate (2006: 45).
 94. Nussbaum (1986: 274).
 95. Comay (2004: 138).
 96. Ware (2017: 388).
 97. Kelley (2011: 19).
 98. McCumber (2014: 69–70), Houlgate (2016: 59).
 99. McCumber (2014: 58).
 100. *Ibid.*, p. 59; Houlgate (2016: 58).
 101. Benhabib, in Marcuse (1987: xiv).
 102. McCumber (1993: 313–314).
 103. Anscombe (2016: 9–12).
 104. Schwebel (2012: 609).

105. Nussbaum (1986: 179).
106. Ibid., p. 183.
107. Hegel (1971: 9, 1975: 960).
108. Ibid., pp. 103–104, 1035–1036; see also Humboldt (1974: 25–27).
109. Marcuse (1966: xxi).
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid., p. xx.
112. Ibid., pp. 6–7.
113. Ibid., p. 174.
114. Aristotle (1986: II.ii.417b18), Gresham (1951: 257).
115. Aristotle (1986: 414a13).
116. McCumber (1993: 257, 316, 256).
117. Ibid., pp. 269–270.
118. Ibid., p. 265.
119. Pensky (2004: 182).
120. Ibid., p. 184.
121. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1988: 104).
122. Ibid., p. 111.
123. Bernstein (2007: 235).
124. Sontag (1980: 111–113, 117).
125. Benjamin (1982, 1999: 92/42), *Convolute A* [A3a, 4].
126. Ibid., pp. 104, 155 [A10, 2].
127. Ibid., pp. 109, 161 [A13].
128. Bernstein (2007: 237).
129. McCumber (1993: 256).
130. Wohlfarth (1993: 14–15).
131. Jardine (1985: 42), WL 2:495/SL695, Stern (2016: 209).
132. Benjamin (2011: 103).
133. McAfee (2008: 139–140), Zerilli (2016: 274).
134. Zerilli (2016: 274).
135. To borrow a phrase from Klein (2019: 9).
136. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1988: 125).

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Part IV

Social Freedom and Emancipation

7 The Dragon Seed Project

Dismantling the Master's House With the Master's Tools?

Paul Giladi

“At that time, I actually thought that [Hegel] was very obsequious. Once when I complained about the phrase: ‘All that is, is rational’, he smiled strangely and remarked, ‘It could also be formulated as all that is rational must be.’ Then he looked about him hastily; but he was quickly reassured, for only Heinrich Beer had heard his words”.

– Heinrich Heine

I

The Dominant Progressive Reading of the Doppelsatz

As is well-known, there has been a long-standing tradition of seeing Hegelianism, particularly the notion of social freedom constitutive of *Sittlichkeit*, either (i) at best, as a quietist conservatism serving as an elaborate defence of the *status quo* that is critically impotent with no significant room for progressive reflection on current power dynamics and current intersubjective recognition orders;¹ or (ii) at worst, as a dialectical articulation and speculative justification of totalitarianism.

Against the conservative and totalitarian readings of the *Doppelsatz*,² some contemporary defenders of Hegel have argued that the charges of illiberalism³ levelled against him by Rudolf Haym et al. are all founded on a serious misunderstanding of Hegel's logico-metaphysical categories.⁴ Specifically, the misunderstanding involves the conflation of *Existenz* (“current existence”) with the *technical* Aristotelian use of *Wirklichkeit* (“actuality”) in the *Doppelsatz*.⁵

In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel defines “actuality” as “the *unity of essence and concrete existence*”.⁶ The technical meaning of “actuality”, therefore, unlike the meaning of “existence” and the ordinary modal notion of actuality, involves an Aristotelian commitment to the full individual realisation of a relevant substance-kind. In other words, *actuality* for Hegel is a *normative* category, one concerning the extent to which *S* correctly embodies its concrete universal.⁷ The technical, normative notion of actuality here is bound up with Hegel's analysis of the logical structure of “judgements

of the Concept”, i.e. the logic of *evaluative* judgements. These types of proposition, exemplified by expressions such as “The roofless house is [a] bad [house]”, concern how well (or poorly) an individual object embodies the substance-kind that comprises its essential nature. As Hegel explains in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*:⁸

The subject then expresses the relation of that particularity to its constitution, i.e. to its genus and, with this, expresses what . . . makes up the content of the predicate (*this* – the immediate individuality – *house* – genus –, *so and so constituted* – particularity –, is good or bad) – *apodictic* judgement. – *All things are a genus* (their determination and purpose) in one *individual* actuality with a *particular* constitution; and their finitude consists in the fact that what is their particular [character] may or may not be adequate to the universal.
(EL: §179)

Under Hegel’s Aristotelian-inspired account concerning the normative extent to which objects exemplify their substance-kinds, then, for example, an eye with astigmatism is a “bad” eye; an odourless rose is a “bad” flower; and a wobbly table is a “bad” table. In this respect, then, *speculative* reflection on everyday speech acts, such as “Now, that’s [what I call] a rose!” or “Gosh, what a rose that is!”, reveal how actuality is articulated *qua* normativity. As Robert Stern puts it, “[such] norms are not based on mere statistical generalisations but reflect claims about what it is for a rose of this species to be a proper exemplar of its kind”.⁹

For Hegel, then, normativity emerges out of the metaphysical relationships between the categories of individuality and (concrete) universality. Crucially, Hegel’s technical notion of actuality draws a substantive distinction between *S*’s current-being-thus-and-so (its existence) and *S*’s ideal exemplification (the actualisation of *S*’s essence). This substantive distinction establishes a marked, *critical* distance between *existence* and *actuality*, insofar as Hegel makes it clear that *S*’s current existence does *not* necessarily mean *S* is in a fully developed, actualised state, having realised its essence.

According to Frederick Neuhouser, with regard to actuality in the domain of social reality,

‘actuality’ refers to existing social reality as reconstructed within rational (philosophical) thought that aims to clarify and bring into harmony the basic principles underlying the various existing social orders that typify western European modernity. As such, actuality represents a purified version of existing reality that is more fully rational than any particular existent social order but that is not for that reason independent of, or out of touch with, the existing world.¹⁰

In other words, given the normative distance between existence and actuality *qua* the social domain, one should read Hegel's *Doppelsatz* in a progressive light. Though Neuhouser does not explicitly make the following claim as such, it seems more than reasonable to construe him as, at the very least, *hinting* that Hegel deploys the metaphysical (and evaluative) distinction between existence and actuality in his social theory for the purpose of ontologically grounding the liberal reform of the Prussian state. Under this progressive reading of the *Doppelsatz*, Hegel is subtly claiming that the reformed, liberal Prussian state, not the Prussian state in its current existence, is actual (and rational).¹¹ This goes some way to explaining why, to quote Michael Hardimon, Hegel is increasingly placed "squarely in the camp of the moderate liberal progressives of his age",¹² and why some liberal thinkers, such as Victor Cousin and John Rawls, view Hegel with some fondness. For Cousin, "[Hegel was] profoundly liberal without being in the least republican";¹³ and, according to Rawls, Hegel was "a moderately progressive reform-minded liberal".¹⁴

In many respects, arguably an even stronger ground for viewing Hegel's progressiveness in terms of his putative alignment with liberal reformism involves appealing to Hegel's theory of poverty and his critique of the capitalist mode of production. For Hegel, civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) is the mediating part of *Sittlichkeit*, in which a self-consciousness gradually transitions from the private sphere of bourgeois family to the public sphere of the political state *via* the type of social freedom achieved by participating in practices of economic exchange and production. Civil society principally concerns viewing modern economic arrangements and practices of increasingly industrialised societies under the framework of *moral economism*, the Smithian contention that market operations are in and of themselves normatively structured for the sake of satisfying needs, thereby enabling and promoting autonomy.¹⁵

However, as Hegel critically notes, "[c]ivil society affords a spectacle of extravagance and want as well as of the physical and ethical degeneration common to them both".¹⁶ Anticipating aspects of Marx's analysis in 1844,¹⁷ Hegel details that the exercise of unfettered market capitalism and the proliferation of exchange discourse result in the accumulation and hoarding of wealth by dominant social groups at the expense of others,¹⁸ to the extent that the allegedly "rational", "auto-correcting", "benevolent" market capitalist practices and logic governing the system of needs produce a thoroughgoingly disenfranchised and impoverished "rabble" (*Pöbel*). Consequently, the veneer of "rational", "auto-correcting", "benevolent" directives of market capitalism and price signalling controls has now been uncovered, revealing an insatiable colonising logic,¹⁹ which threatens collapse into a state of anomie.²⁰ For Hegel, the logic underlying market capitalist modes of production and their corresponding framing of social relations does *not* necessarily provide the material (or symbolic) needs for all agents and does *not*

necessarily help individuals form affectively and normatively uplifting subjectivities through their own productive activity.

The harm of poverty consists in a crippling capability deprivation, which produces *Pöbelhaftigkeit*, a fractured and broken subjectivity that hinders the development of a healthy practical relation-to-self, to use Axel Honneth's expression. As C. J. Pereira Di Salvo writes,

whereas for Kant, poverty is problematic because it constitutes a condition in which a *person* stands in a wrongful relation of dependence to other persons, for Hegel, poverty is problematic for a much more fundamental reason: namely, because it constitutes a condition in which a *human being* is prevented from realising her capacity for personality in the first place.²¹

Poverty, as both symbolic and material alienation and degradation, prevents a human being from having an affectively and normatively uplifting self-conception that provides a minimal *sine qua non* condition for subsequently developing and instituting the kinds of intersubjective recognitive relationship with others and one's broader social environment emblematic of *Geistigkeit*.²² By consequence, the rabble increasingly think, feel, and act disconnectedly from modern social institutions, as well as from those individuals who realise their self-interpretations through those institutions.²³ In this way, the profoundly painful alienation caused by poverty, which is itself a direct product of the destructive practices of market capitalism, mutilates human subjectivity, forcing the impoverished to become more and more despairing, feral, criminalised, and to even *self-identify* as a "rabble".²⁴ Dudley Knowles puts this point particularly well:

'We were poor but we were honest' is not the mentality of the rabble. Rab C. Nesbitt's anguished confession – 'We are shite' – captures the desperation of the poverty of the underclass as it is experienced.²⁵

Furthermore, as the impoverished slide towards becoming a rabble, their descent into a violent underclass invariably numbs the potential for those distressed at their pain to stand in the right kind of moral relation to them. This numbing of the appropriate reactive attitude harms one's ability to maintain the Levinasian-Weilian default obligations one has when regarding the pain of others, and this in turn, entrenches and reproduces anomie. To paraphrase Susan Sontag, writing on Woolf's *Three Guineas*:

Not to be pained . . . not to recoil . . . not to strive to abolish what causes this havoc . . . would be the reactions of a moral monster. And, she is saying, we are not monsters, we members of the educated

class. Our failure is one of imagination, of empathy: we have failed to hold this reality in mind.²⁶

That Hegel claims “[t]he important question of how poverty is to be abolished is one of the most disturbing problems which agitate modern society”²⁷ is a clear indication of a philosopher critically alert to one of the most distressing problems of modernity. For Hegel, as Lukács correctly notes, “does not close his eyes to the destructive effects of the capitalist division of labour and of the introduction of machinery into human labour”.²⁸

Commentators on Hegel’s views here, such as Knowles, Lisa Herzog, Richard Winfield, Jay Bernstein, and to some, albeit lesser, extent, Neu-houser and Hardimon, make sense of the progressive elements in Hegel, by taking (i) his alertness to one of the most distressing problems of modernity, and (ii) his account of the phenomenology of alienation to illustrate a commitment to social democratic reformism:

[C]ivil society cannot respond to the right of the poor to public support, and the poor themselves degenerate in moral stature as they recognise that their irremediable distress is not their own fault. We can have no doubt about the force of Hegel’s criticism of the poverty that is endemic to civil society, but it is surely no weakness in his account of civil society that he cannot propose effective reform, if that is the way the world is. . . . He is in roughly the same position as the liberal in the modern world.²⁹

This is one of the reasons why for Hegel the market needs to be tamed and “sublated” by other institutions, in particular the political state. Not only in the state, however, but also in civil society itself there are institutions that are meant to prevent the worst excesses of the market and to stabilise civil society: the police and the corporations. . . . [Hegel’s] vision of the market is not that of the benevolent, self-adjusting social mechanism that Smith has in mind. . . . Although Hegel thus shares some of Smith’s central insights, he omits crucial elements of the latter’s systemic perspective on economic processes as well as his optimism about the market’s ability to solve social problems. . . . Today, the need to “tame” the market and to curb its negative side effects seems to be greater than ever. . . .³⁰ Hegel is in fact in favour of a much stronger regulation of the market than Smith.³¹

Hegel may not have conceived what the economy should be and how it should be regulated in complete or entirely consistent detail, but his fundamental identification of the system of needs as a form of ethical community anchors the challenge to remake “capitalism with a human face”.³²

To account for the recognition due to each individual as an individual, to recognise the right of subjectivity, Hegel relies on the promise of welfare state capitalism.³³

Knowles, Herzog, Winfield, and Bernstein all seem to agree that the best way to make sense of Hegel as a political progressive is to see *Sittlichkeit* and the *Doppelsatz* in terms of piecemeal reformism, namely the social democratic disposition to lessen the violent practices of capitalism.³⁴ However, in what follows, I challenge the idea that liberals have the monopoly of the progressive reading of Hegel's social theory. Liberalism does not make much sense of Hegelianism as politically progressive, and if anything, interpreting *Sittlichkeit* and the *Doppelsatz* as a bedfellow of social democracy stultifies the radical emancipatory dimension of Hegelianism.

II

The Progressive Reading: The "Severe Style"

To fully detail my specific objections to the liberal reading of the *Doppelsatz* and Hegelian social theory as a way of safeguarding Hegelianism as politically progressive, I think it would be helpful to first articulate Hegel's logico-metaphysical conception of the recognitive structure of the political state.³⁵

Hegel conceives of the state as a *whole*,³⁶ one whose structure is constituted by mediated unity. In contrast to Attic ethical life (typified by immediate unity), modern individuals no longer define themselves as a functioning part of the *polis*; and in contrast to modern life, (typified by difference) individuals do not regard their subjectivity as constituted independently of social relations and environments. The transition from immediate unity through difference to mediated unity, where the latter involves the social freedom of *Sittlichkeit*,³⁷ is one in which the individual can regard modern social institutions, especially the state, as helping foster the development of their social-rational capacities and thereby the development of their self-realisation. As Hegel writes:

[The norms embedded in the ethical structures of the family/civil society/the state] are not something alien to the subject. On the contrary, his spirit bears witness to them as to its own essence, the essence in which he has a feeling of his selfhood, and in which he lives as in his own element which is not distinguished from himself. The subject is thus directly linked to the ethical order by a relation which is more like an identity than even the relation of faith or trust.

(EPR: §147)

From the perspective of mediated unity, the individual is not conceived of simply as an anonymous cog in the workings of a complex social machine, nor are individual and state independently constituted, nor are the interests of the individual seen as antagonistic to those of the state *eo ipso*. Rather, the individual is conceived of as a *bona fide* self-determining and rationally self-reflexive agent who requires assistance from modern social institutions in an effort to realise their own autonomy. The state is developmentally required, as it is the principal institution of *Sittlichkeit*.³⁸ As Alan Patten correctly argues:

A community containing the family, civil society, and the state is the minimum self-sufficient institutional structure in which agents can develop, maintain, and exercise the capacities and attitudes involved with subjective freedom. . . . The capacities for reflection, analysis, and self-discipline, the sense of oneself as a free and independent agent – can be reliably developed and sustained only in the context of certain social institutions and practices. In particular, in Hegel’s view, institutions such as property and contract, that work to mediate the attraction and expression of mutual recognition, must be in place for these capacities to be fully developed and sustained.³⁹

For Hegel, then, modern social institutions are good because they are necessary for realising social freedom.⁴⁰ To quote Neuhouser here:

[i]mplicit in Hegel’s view of ethical life’s Conceptual structure is the claim that part of what makes the modern social world rational is that it allows its members to develop and express different, complementary identities. The idea here is that each type of identity has a distinct value for individuals and that possessing them all is essential to realising the full range of possible modes of selfhood. To miss out on any of these forms of social membership, then, is to be deprived of one of the basic ways of being a self and hence to suffer an impoverishment of one’s life.⁴¹

As such, for a practical relation-to-self to be healthy and in order to be properly autonomous, progressive intersubjective relations – properly developmental relations structured around the norm of self-realisation – must be in place and operating without coercion. Social processes and institutions are, therefore, assessed in terms of how well (if at all) they foster communicability and the development of subjectivities which help individuals achieve self-realisation,⁴² since, quoting Habermas, “[a] post-conventional ego-identity can only stabilise itself in the anticipation of symmetrical relations of unforced reciprocal recognition”.⁴³

To put this another way, *Sittlichkeit* can be legitimately construed as a macro-politicisation of G. H. Mead’s sociality thesis,⁴⁴ namely that

human beings are so immersed in social life that there is no development of full freedom outside the social sphere.⁴⁵ Hegel's robust intersubjectivism here is bound up with his critique of liberalism, a critique which is also powerfully proposed by Dewey.

Under liberalism,

1. Individuals have normative and ontological priority over institutions.
2. Individuals have pre-political or natural rights.
3. Individuals have their subjectivities and interests fully formed before engaging in any kind of deliberative discourse.
4. Freedom consists in freedom from interference by others, including by the state.

Hegel (as well as Dewey) rejects liberalism on the grounds that individuals are not ontologically prior to society and that social institutions are not merely means for fulfilling the pre-social interests of individuals. In the same way that the early modern tradition conceived of the relation between mind and world as one of fundamental separation, Dewey, in Hegelian fashion, claims that liberalism is a practical exemplification of "the most pervasive fallacy of philosophical thinking",⁴⁶ namely dividing up and separating phenomena into strict dichotomies. As Alison Kadlec writes, "contemporary society has inherited from classical philosophy a set of dualisms that must be exposed and dismantled if we are to make real progress toward improving the human condition".⁴⁷

Contra the picture of the atomistic, egoistic individual, both Hegel and Dewey respectively advocate a nuanced social holism that aims to avoid the ontological mistake of conceiving of individuals as radically distinct from social institutions:

[L]iberalism knows that an individual is nothing fixed, given ready-made. It is something achieved, and achieved not in isolation but with the aid and support of conditions, cultural and physical: – including in "cultural", economic, legal and political institutions as well as science and art.

(LW 11: 291)

As with the dissolution of the mind/world dualism, the individual and society are no longer conceived in "the celebrated modern antithesis of the Individual and Social".⁴⁸ According to Hegel's and Dewey's political holism, freedom should be understood in terms of the capacity to intersubjectively realise oneself.⁴⁹ Crucially, such individual self-realisation can only be achieved by conceiving of individuality as necessarily embedded in a reflective and social environment.⁵⁰ These social ecological conditions, moreover, must be democratically arranged and constituted if

they are to perform their normative function. To quote Dewey in *Reconstruction in Philosophy*:

Government, business, art, religion, all social institutions have a meaning, a purpose. That purpose is to set free and to develop the capacities of human individuals without respect to race, sex, class or economic status. And this is all one with saying that the test of their value is the extent to which they educate every individual into the full stature of his possibility. Democracy has many meanings, but if it has a moral meaning, it is found in resolving that the supreme test of all political institutions and industrial arrangements shall be the contribution they make to the all-around growth of every member of society.

(RP: 186)

I, therefore, contend that, for Hegel (as well as for Dewey), “having identity-constituting attachments to one’s community is made compatible with conceiving of oneself as an *individual* – that is, as a *person* with rights and interests separate from those of the community, and as a *moral subject* who is both able and entitled to pass judgement on the goodness of social practices”.⁵¹ Hegel makes it clear that individual autonomy cannot be achieved unless there is a supportive background environment structured in accordance with norms of symmetrical recognition, comprising relevant social institutions and values, which provide individuals with material and epistemic resources to realise their own normative aims.

Specifically, an individual’s goals cannot become a means of self-realisation if these goals are not embedded in an accommodating context,⁵² since this context provides the social space as well as the resources necessary for realising autonomy. To this extent, then, social institutions and practices are not external to individuals’ autonomy – they are constitutive of autonomy itself. Such a point is also made by Dewey:

The individual interest no longer has to be sacrificed to the general law as an accidental or even unworthy element. The particular self-interest is identified with the law, and the law is no longer an abstraction which ought to be, but lives in individuals as the very essence and substance of their own life and interests. . . . The will finds complete expression only when it gets realised in actual institutions and when these institutions are so bound up with the very life purposes of the individual that they supply him his concrete motives. . . . These institutions, since they are actual existences, furnish the definite and specific conditions under which action must take place. . . . [S]ince the individual is a member of these institutions, and can live his own life only in and through these institutions, they are one with himself,

they are his true good. It is in performing his own function, taking his own position with reference to these institutions that he truly becomes himself and gets the full activity of which he is capable. It is this union, then, of the subjective and objective sides, of the particular will and the universal, of self-interest and law, which constitutes the essential character of the ethical world.

(HPS: §117–118, 155–156)

Crucially, though, acknowledging our intersubjective vulnerability and our interdependency, *contra* capitalist ideology, should neither be construed as a psychological failing nor entail a model of the human being as inherently impotent or weak. As Dewey again writes:

From a social standpoint, dependence denotes a power rather than a weakness; it involves interdependence. There is always a danger that increased personal independence will decrease the social capacity of an individual. In making him more self-reliant, it may make him more self-sufficient; it may lead to aloofness and indifference. It often makes an individual so insensitive in his relations to others as to develop an illusion of being really able to stand and act alone – an unnamed form of insanity which is responsible for a large part of the remediable suffering of the world.

(D&E: 48–49)

I previously claimed that, in many respects, a strong ground for viewing Hegelianism's progressiveness in terms of alignment with social democracy (i.e. "capitalism with a human face") seems to be Hegel's concern about poverty. For Hegel, poverty prevents a human being from having an affectively and normatively uplifting self-conception that provides a minimal *sine qua non* condition for subsequently developing and instituting the kinds of intersubjective recognitive relationship with others and one's broader social environment emblematic of *Geistigkeit*.

In other words, poverty amounts to a severe capability deprivation, one which stultifies the impoverished from being able to develop, sustain, and actualise a self-conception that can benefit from the kinds of positive intersubjective recognitive practices at both a symbolic and material level. The effects of such capability deprivation serve as metaphysical barriers, as opposed to only (but not merely) psychological and economic barriers to *Geistigkeit* and *an-und-für-sich-Sein*. Victims of poverty are perennially stuck in (immediate) *Natur*, rather than in a position articulate and navigate social space with other agents. Above all, as Hardimon correctly puts it, for Hegel,

modern society is not only organised in such a way as to deprive the rabble of the material necessities of life and exclude them from

meaningful social participation, it is also organised in such a way as to *make them* ethically depraved. If the rabble are wicked, it is society's fault, not theirs. . . . Poverty and the creation of the rabble are *structural features* of civil society. . . .⁵³ If anything, the thought that poverty and the creation of a rabble represent necessary features of civil society would seem to provide reasons for regarding this social formation as fundamentally flawed.⁵⁴

Importantly, because poverty and the rabble directly emerge out of the pathological logic and practices of capitalism,⁵⁵ Hegel himself could not see any way of solving the modern problem of poverty under any capitalist framework, whether classical *laissez-faire*/(neoliberal) or proto-welfare iterations.⁵⁶ The state *via* the police, for Hegel, is responsible for preventing poverty, but throughout §§242–245 of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel argues that no proto-welfare provision can solve this modern problem. To quote Audré Lorde, “[f]or the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change”.⁵⁷ As such, I think, *pace* Knowles’s characterisation of Hegel as an “anguished Tory”,⁵⁸ I agree with Nathan Ross that “Hegel’s demand to think of civil society and the state in terms of patterns of reciprocal mediation represents not so much a logical argument for the sustaining of capitalism through state support, as a critique of any conception of economic or political behaviour that does not take seriously the ethical needs of human beings within the system that produces them”.⁵⁹

Social democratic reformism presupposes that one ought to accept from the very outset the vocabulary and general *Weltanschauung* of the capitalist mode of production,⁶⁰ and then offer humanising tweaks to a system that soften the blow from capitalism rather than breaking its cycle of ideological reproduction. Since the structure of a social democracy is constituted by the systems of money (market capitalism) and formal power (the state), the provision of welfare will invariably fail to fulfil the function of mitigating conflict.⁶¹ For, under the liberal-welfare state, there is little or no way to resist ideological encroachment and colonisation by systems, since what is the *base* of the societal superstructure is the capitalist mode and relations of production. If the base is constituted by systems, then the entire whole is vulnerable to encroachment by systems. In fact, Hegel is acutely conscious of how even the corporations, namely the guild-inspired institutions⁶² which help agents move from their public sphere ethos as “worker” to that of “citizen”, cannot *solve* the modern problem of poverty.⁶³

Corporations operate in a proto-deliberative democratic manner, providing all their members with a chance to determine and vote on important actions. Although the corporations promote more symmetrical forms of intersubjectivity and baptise agents into habituated concerns for the

common good,⁶⁴ by providing their members with job security and recognised, shareable identity, corporations themselves remain all too vulnerable to colonisation by interest groups. As such, they risk reproducing in the ethical sphere the fractured, atomistic self-determination they were desperately trying to overcome. To quote Ross here:

Hegel realises that individuals in modern states have already assumed largely 'liberal' bourgeois identities as a result of the very systems in which they earn their bread. Without denying the necessity in the kinds of self-interest that such individuals experience, Hegel seeks to describe a form of politics that can nevertheless address the structural flaws endemic to this system of production.⁶⁵

Hegel's concern about poverty, in conjunction with his norms of symmetrical recognition comprising relevant social institutions and values which provide individuals with material and epistemic resources to realise their own normative aims, rather than provide a strong ground for viewing his political philosophy in terms of alignment with social democracy, reveals the "intrinsically anti-capitalist [nature of Hegel's political philosophy] in the sense that it outlines a theory of both modern institutions and individual agency that requires as its basic prerequisite the primacy of the universal or the privileging of the common interest".⁶⁶ This also finds support in the work of Bernardo Ferro:

[I]t is possible to regard Hegel's theory of political recognition as the starting point of a more ambitious political solution, grounded not merely in the idea of regulation, but in the actual democratisation of the economic realm. . . . As soon as one recognises that Hegel's idea of freedom is irreducible to the traditional framework of social democracy, based on the combination of free market economy and state regulation, his views emerge as a surprisingly fertile ground for the reinvention of traditional socialism.⁶⁷

In these ways, liberalism does not make much sense of Hegelianism as politically progressive. Rather, to make sense of Hegelianism's political progressiveness, one would, therefore, need an alternative to the liberal reading of both the *Doppelsatz* and *Sittlichkeit*, one which is significantly closer to democratic socialism, rather than to social democracy.

Hegel's reflections on poverty reveal, as Gillian Rose puts it, the "severe style" of the *Philosophy of Right*, where the brutal phenomenology of poverty is accounted "to give a true representation of its object and makes little concession to the spectator. It is designed solely to do justice to the integrity of the object".⁶⁸ *Contra* the myth of Hegel as providing a speculative vindication of capitalism, at no point in the *Philosophy of Right* is there the kind of liberal fetishisation of the rabble often

found in contemporary advanced Western societies;⁶⁹ at no point in the *Philosophy of Right* is there a Panglossian view of the social world which can serve as a meaningful social theodicy justifying civil society as enabling at-homeness-in-the-world; and “reason as the rose in the cross of the present”⁷⁰ does not point to or entail a saccharine synthesis or rosy reconciliation.

On the contrary, in the Preface, Hegel is mournful about the Owl of Minerva,⁷¹ and in his discussion of civil society, he expresses quasi-Adornian despair at the disenchantment wrought by modernity. However, crucially, at the same time, Hegel uses the speculative nature of the *Doppelsatz* to subtly encourage overcoming the *status quo*. As Rose writes:

Hegel does not mean that philosophy is a form of reconstruction which cannot contribute to social and political change. On the contrary, these propositions, read speculatively, indicate the conditions under which philosophy becomes effective. . . . Hegel presents here not a quiescent justification of the *status quo*, but a speculative proposition: that it is the time, after the time of art and religion, for the owl of Roman Minerva, the esoteric *concept* of philosophy, to spread its wings and to turn back or rather forwards into Greek Athena, the goddess of the unity of the *polis* and philosophy, absolute ethical life, the exoteric unity of theory and practice, of concept and intuition. Thus this reading of the task of philosophy runs contrary to the common reading which contrasts the active role proclaimed for philosophy in the ‘Preface’ to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* with the passive role delineated in the ‘Preface’ to the *Philosophy of Right*.⁷²

On this point, there is an important *interpretive* advantage in thinking that Hegel deploys *speculative* judgements, such as the *Doppelsatz*, for critical, progressive purposes, to the extent that, following Rose, one recognises the radical normative content embedded in the conceptual toolkit of the *Philosophy of Right*.

In “Hegel’s Concept of Modernity”, Habermas contends that there is a significant difference between the early (Jena) Hegel and the mature Hegel. The early Hegel, like Schiller, Schelling, and Hölderlin, is critically alert to the “authoritarian side”⁷³ of the Enlightenment and to the ways in which the principle of subjectivity⁷⁴ – modernity’s principal norm – invariably involves “domination”.⁷⁵ Habermas points to how Hegel, in “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate”,⁷⁶ mythopoetically articulates the ways in which modernity’s principle of subjectivity operates under a logic involving the “act of tearing loose from an intersubjectively shared lifeworld [established by love],”⁷⁷ which results in an “*alienated* subjectivity that has broken with the common life”.⁷⁸ In other words, Hegel is the first post-Kantian thinker to grasp that modernity is a *problem*, how modernity’s liberating drives invariably involve instrumentalisation and

that this hollows out modernity's potential for intersubjectivity and communicative action. Hegel, baldly put, is ambivalent to modernity:

Aus diesem Prinzip erklärt er gleichzeitig die Überlegenheit der modernen Welt und deren Krisenhaftigkeit: diese erfährt sich als die Welt des Fortschritts und des entfremdeten Geistes in einem. Deshalb ist der erste Versuch, die Moderne auf den Begriff zu bringen, gleichursprünglich mit einer Kritik an der Moderne.⁷⁹ (*The principle of subjectivity explained for him simultaneously the superiority of the modern world and its crisis character, in the sense that it represents both a world of progress and of alienated spirit. For this reason, the first attempt to conceptualise the modern era was at the same time a critique of modernity* – translation modified.)

The point of the intuitions from the days of his youth that Hegel wanted to conceptualise was that in the modern world emancipation became transformed into unfreedom because the unshackling power of reflection had become autonomous and now achieved unification only through the violence of a subjugating subjectivity.⁸⁰

However, for all of the attractiveness of Hegel's radical insights in his Jena period, Habermas lambasts the mature Hegel on the grounds that he "did not pursue any further the traces of communicative reason that are clearly to be found in his early writings".⁸¹ Instead, according to Habermas, using Dieter Henrich's expression, Hegel articulated an aloof "emphatic institutionalism"⁸² in the *Philosophy of Right*, leaving the critical concepts of intersubjectivity and communicative action underdeveloped and in stasis.

For Habermas, there are two substantive problems with Hegel's mature position: (i) by explicating the ways in which civil society is ultimately sublated in relation to modern state structures, the *Philosophy of Right* "can convict modernity of its offences without having recourse to anything other than the principle of subjectivity immanent within it";⁸³ (ii) the emphatic institutionalism of the *Philosophy of Right* encourages contemplation, rather than sustained critique of the world – the *Philosophy of Right*, in other words, merely muzzles critical dispositionality in favour of indifference: "[m]odernity as brought to its concept permits a stoic retreat from it".⁸⁴ As Fred Dallmayr puts the point, "[w]hile praising Hegel's philosophical élan, Habermas finds Hegel's insurgency flawed and ultimately unsuccessful – mainly because of its 'subjectivist' moorings and its excessively theoretical-contemplative character".⁸⁵

In sum, then, for Habermas, the early Hegel is active, radical, critical – he is charting the path to postmetaphysical thinking through the Intersubjectivist Turn and its democratic alternative to formal reason – whereas the mature Hegel is passive, aloof, and produces a "*blunting of critique*".⁸⁶ The

mature Hegel relapses into metaphysical (i.e. identity) thinking through retaining commitments to the philosophy of the subject.⁸⁷

As we have seen, in Hegel's youthful writings the option of explicating the ethical totality as a communicative reason embodied in intersubjective life-contexts was still open. Along this line, a democratic self-organisation of society could have taken the place of the monarchical apparatus of the state. By way of contrast, the logic of a subject conceiving itself makes the institutionalism of a strong state necessary. . . . Hegel had hardly conceptualised the diremption of modernity before the unrest and movement of modernity was ready to explode this concept. The reason for this is that he could carry out his critique of subjectivity only within the framework of the philosophy of the subject.⁸⁸

From Habermas's postmetaphysical perspective, given that Hegel articulates the communicative normative content of modern ethical life in metaphysical ways, Hegel – at best – multiplies beyond necessity in his development of a proto-form of communicative rationality and action. For Habermas, the problem with metaphysical thinking is that it is, to quote Richard Rorty, “a permanent neutral matrix for inquiry”,⁸⁹ and its conceptual toolkit neglects the pragmatic dimensions of everyday language-use, which in turn suppresses “the desire for as much intersubjective agreement as possible, the desire to extend the reference of ‘us’ as far as we can”.⁹⁰

Instead of securing critical sanctuary through the idealist metaphysics of *Vernunft*,⁹¹ Habermas prefers the postmetaphysical contractarian model of uncoerced intersubjectively constituted will-formation and validity claims in a communicative community of free and equal individuals – which is, in effect, the rationally reconstructed normative content of *Sittlichkeit*. In other words, Habermas's postmetaphysical contractarian model is Hegelian intersubjectively constituted agency without any “metaphysical mortgages”.⁹² As he writes, “the theory of communicative action can reconstruct Hegel's concept of the ethical context of life (independently of the premises of the philosophy of consciousness)”.⁹³

Metaphysical thinking exhibits a pathological cognitive propensity for regarding normative constraints and the ultimate grounds for the justification of our beliefs as being beyond our *practices*.⁹⁴ As Carl Sachs writes, “[m]etaphysics, thus understood, consists of the subordination of one's descriptions of the world – one's ‘vocabularies’, in Rortyan terms – to something beyond all of our normative social practices – something beyond us, to which we are answerable, and which anchors our descriptions of the world, society, and self in something beyond those descriptions”.⁹⁵

Objective Spirit, therefore, given its construal of the metaphysical relationship between the categories of individuality and (concrete) universality, for Habermas, invariably “become[s] the object of passive contemplation removed from participation in the actual world process”.⁹⁶ Postmetaphysical thinking, typified by Habermas’s pragmatist fallibilist methodology of rational reconstruction, sees a turn to the pragmatics of language. “This concedes primacy to world-disclosing language – as the medium for the possibility of reaching understanding, for social cooperation, and for self-controlled learning processes – over world-generating subjectivity”.⁹⁷ According to Habermas, then, Hegel, like Fichte, Kant, and Descartes – the principal philosophers of the subject – “peers right through language as though it were a glassy medium without properties”.⁹⁸

However, as with Dallmayr,⁹⁹ “I find the division between the “young” and the “mature” Hegel – or between a Romantic, mythopoetic outlook and a later pure rationalism – vastly exaggerated”.¹⁰⁰ To use two further examples from Hegel’s mature period, where the radical and critical spirit of his Jena period against formalisation and alienation is alive and well:¹⁰¹

The fact is that interest, whether in the content or in the form of the former metaphysics, or in both together, has been lost. . . . The exoteric teaching of the Kantian philosophy – that the *understanding ought not to be allowed to soar above experience*, lest the cognitive faculty become a *theoretical reason* that by itself would beget nothing but *mental fancies* – this was the justification coming from the scientific camp for renouncing philosophical thought. In support of this popular doctrine was added the cry of alarm of modern pedagogy, that the pressing situation of the time called for attention to immediate needs – that just as in ways of knowledge experience is first, so for skill in public and private life, exercise and practical education are the essential, they alone what is required, while theoretical insight is even harmful. . . . [T]he singular spectacle came into view of a *cultivated people without metaphysics* – like a temple richly ornamented in other respects but without a holy of holies.

(SL: 21.5–6; 7–8)¹⁰²

[T]he contrast between the sensuous and the spiritual in man, as the battle of spirit against flesh, of duty for duty’s sake, of the cold command against particular interest, warmth of heart, sensuous inclinations and impulses, against the individual dispositions in general; as the harsh opposition between inner freedom and the necessity of external nature, further as the contradiction between the dead inherently empty concept, and the full concreteness of life, between

theory and subjective thinking, and objective existence and experience. These are oppositions which have not been invented at all by the subtlety of reflection or the pedantry of philosophy; in numerous forms they have always preoccupied and troubled the human consciousness, even if it is modern culture that has first worked them out most sharply and driven them up to the peak of harshest contradiction. Spiritual culture, the modern intellect, produces this opposition in man which makes him an amphibious animal, because he now has to live in two worlds which contradict one another.

(LA I: 80–81)

For the mature Hegel – just like the Jena Hegel – one must go beyond the modern era’s preference for formalisation and view of nature as “self-alienated spirit”.¹⁰³ This critique of modernity is speculative, since its aims supplant the perspective of *Verstand* with the perspective of *Vernunft* in discourse about sense-making. For, if one is to combat formalisation and alienation in theoretical as well as practical inquiry, one must develop speculative sense-making practices, in which hermeneutic power can be rooted in the communicative power of discourse about sense-making.

Hegel, therefore, deems rational inquiry as defective and morphing into one-dimensionality when rational activity is exclusively articulated in terms of the kind of strategic inferential patterns symptomatic of *Verstand*. As Robert Pippin writes, making a similar point, “[i]n Hegel’s language it was this overly ‘finite’ view of subjectivity that generated the modern problems of alienation and scepticism, as modern subjects struggled to understand the significance of their moral lives and cognitive attitudes without the larger (again ‘developmental’) context or whole necessary for such reflection”.¹⁰⁴

While there is still, of course, *plenty* to discuss further about both Habermas’s reading of Hegel,¹⁰⁵ and the ultimate plausibility of post-metaphysical thinking,¹⁰⁶ I think one can, at the very least, claim here that Habermas’s division between the young and the mature Hegel, and Habermas’s view of the mature Hegel as blunting critique, are clearly contestable: there is an important interpretive advantage in thinking that Hegel deploys speculative judgements for critical, progressive purposes, to the extent that, following Rose, one recognises the radical normative content embedded in the conceptual toolkit of the *Philosophy of Right*.

In many respects, and somewhat strangely, the *speculative* force of Hegelianism’s progressiveness was quickly detected by the Prussian restorationists in the 1830s, rather than by Hegel’s most earnest defenders in recent decades. Most notably on this subject, the conservative reactionary Karl Ernst Schubarth, in 1839, deemed Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* a “call to insurrection and rebellion”.¹⁰⁷ And, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, through Johann Friedrich Eichhorn (the successor of Altenstein), asked

Schelling in 1841, as a condition of Schelling's high salary appointment, to "stamp out the dragon seed" of Hegelianism.¹⁰⁸

While I would reject the claim that Hegelianism is a call to insurrection and rebellion, those nineteenth century conservatives had correctly grasped (and wanted to stultify) its progressiveness. Rather ironically, then, the Prussian restorationists efforts to demonise Hegelianism would have turned Adorno's hermeneutical principle "what these works say, is not what their words say",¹⁰⁹ on its head, not to decry ideology present in Hegel's metaphysics, but to decry Hegelianism's *emancipatory potential*.

III

Hegel vs. Hegel(ianism)

From what I have been arguing, there seems to be a tension between (i) the model of the state which Hegel *himself* preferred, namely constitutional monarchy,¹¹⁰ (ii) Hegel's own reflections on how conscience exhibits its preference for "withdrawal from the social world rather than critique or social activism",¹¹¹ and (iii) the ironically significantly broader proto-democratic socialist features of his own speculative conceptual resources that Hegel either was reluctant to make explicit out of political expediency or was himself incapable of recognising.¹¹² As Hardimon alludes, "[i]t is possible, however, that Hegel failed to grasp or fully appreciate the implications of his own view".¹¹³

On the subject of latter claim, Todd McGowan has very recently gone so far as to propose that "[the *Doppelsatz*] is even more radical than Hegel himself understands and has implications far beyond Hegel's analysis. . . . The call for theorising the rationality of the actual places Hegel in the company of the greatest political revolutionaries rather than that of apologists for power".¹¹⁴ Regardless of the ultimate plausibility of the latter part of what McGowan proposes, the tension between Hegel himself and his own discursive resources seems to signify at least "[t]he Janus character of Hegel's philosophy".¹¹⁵

In what follows, I propose that there is enough in Hegelian social philosophic resources to reasonably claim that the state which actualises autonomy is not any kind of constitutional monarchy, *contra* Hegel, and certainly not the neoliberal capitalist socio-economic system: neither system embodies the level of rationality required for freedom that the rational state would exemplify.

It is far from clear how exactly a constitutional monarchy, namely a fusion of representative (i.e. parliamentary) democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy, would best fulfil the normative function of realising autonomy, especially because this more liberal system of power and authority remains necessarily hierarchical, involving practices of ideological, and therefore paradigmatically asymmetrical, recognition underpinning

broader patterns of domination and exploitation.¹¹⁶ As such, it should come to no surprise, as Hardimon notes that

[v]irtually no one today finds Hegel's arguments for [the monarch] to be compelling. However, if one's concern is with the distribution of power in Hegel's political state, as well it might be, the proper source of worry is not the monarchy, whose powers are rather restricted, but rather the bureaucracy, the real seat of power in the modern political state as Hegel represents it.¹¹⁷

With regard to the framework of modern capitalism, such a system hinders the growth of individual freedom and places barriers on the development of autonomy, since the kind of practices the capitalist framework produces and reproduces are not communicative rational and genuinely mutually recognitive practices. To quote Michael Thompson here:

Modern capitalism should be seen not as a system of market exchange coordinated by self-interest, the central idea that characterised modern economic life in Hegel's time. Rather, it needs to be seen as a more comprehensive social formation that is more than an economic phenomenon but also . . . a system that organises ever larger segments of society around its own logic and imperatives in order to increase profit, or for the benefit of one segment (or class) of society at the expense of others.¹¹⁸

Economic institutions are more than merely means of exchange or the satisfaction of needs. In modern societies, capitalism has become the dominant institution because of its constant need to steer and dominate other spheres of social and political life. Modern markets, as they become more global, necessitate the state to involve itself in economic affairs; the nature of education and culture becomes regimented according to both the needs and demands of the broader marketplace and the search for expanded profits; and the practices and norms of everyday life are affected and shaped by the regimented processes of what Max Weber termed "legitimate domination" and "rationalisation," where modern habits of work and life become organised around the imperatives of economic efficiency and productivity not to mention rampant consumption.¹¹⁹

To effect the realisation of reason embedded in the structure of *Sittlichkeit*, one would need to sublimate, rather than tweak, the current socio-economic paradigm. The conceptual resources that partly comprise Hegel's own theory of social freedom enable one to view *Hegelianism* as having far greater affinity with republican democratic forms of association than with a system of constitutional monarchy, regardless of how well-intended and non-autocratic that constitutional monarchy may well

be. Even though Hegel *himself* was suspicious of large-scale mass democracy, he insists that political representation,¹²⁰ as Molly Farneth puts it, “is not merely a matter of tallying the votes of abstract individuals or tracking the will of an indeterminate ‘public’. Rather, it is a matter of getting the legitimate and determinate concerns of actual groups of people concretely integrated into the deliberative process”.¹²¹

Importantly, though, if one construes *Sittlichkeit* systematically rather than construe ethical life *qua* Hegel’s particular socio-political context, then the vocabulary of *Sittlichkeit*, with its commitment to mutual recognition as communicative action guided by communicative rational practices for the purpose of realising one’s practical relation-to-self can be reasonably said to find kinship with Deweyan democracy.¹²² In this respect, then, the Janusian character of Hegel on democracy can be found in Adorno’s nuanced reading:

Hegelian philosophy becomes the figure of a comprehensive commitment to a lack of naïveté; an early answer to a state of the world that incessantly participates in weaving its own veil of illusion. . . . This is certainly one of the deepest motives of Hegel’s philosophy, even though his philosophy itself is unaware of it.

(HTS: 64)

The Janusian character concerns how Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right* regards constitutional monarchy as the actualisation of mediated unity in the political sphere, and in doing so, Hegel is committed to ideology; whereas the Hegelian discursive resources of *Sittlichkeit* itself provide one with good reason to view Hegelian social theory as more perfectionist and democratically oriented, slowly approximating Deweyan standards:

The provision of this opportunity of [acquiring] knowledge has the more universal aspect of permitting *public opinion* to arrive for the first time at *true thoughts* and *insight* with regard to the condition and concept of the state and its affairs, thereby *enabling it to form more rational judgements on the latter*. . . . Just as such publicity provides a signal opportunity for these abilities to develop, and offers them a platform on which they may attain high honours, so also does it constitute a remedy for the self-conceit of individuals and of the mass, and a means – indeed one of the most important means – of educating them.

(EPR: §315)

A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others,

and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity.

(D&E: 93)

Dewey makes it clear that democracy should not be understood as a purely political concept. What democracy involves is more basic than either a type of constitution empowering voters or a type of government, one typified by majority rule.¹²³ Democracy, rather, is a set of values comprising a particular form of associating with others. Democracy is, in short, a way of living. As Kadlec correctly notes, “democracy, then, cannot be reduced to a set of institutional functions or abstract visions of the state”.¹²⁴ Crucially, a democratic way of life is the life of inquiry, where inquiry, à la Peirce, is open, non-dogmatic, inclusive, fallibilist, ceaseless, critical problem-solving experimentation. To this extent, the democratic life and the inquiring life are mutually supportive, insofar as democratic environments promote and sustain inquiry, and inquiry promotes and sustains democracy. There are, I think, two important positive connections between left-wing Hegelianism and Dewey here.

(i) For left-wing Hegelianism (as I argued earlier), social processes and modern institutions are structured for the purposes of fostering the communitarian development of subjectivities that help individuals achieve self-realisation. For Dewey, social processes and institutions are structured for the purpose of fostering growth and nurture “the critical, inquiring spirit”.¹²⁵ To quote James Good here, “[o]nce more, for Dewey, the actualisation of ideals is the key to Hegel’s thought. The actualisation of freedom is possible only in a society whose institutions are rational and in which the individual can feel at home”.¹²⁶ Both philosophers, therefore, are committed to the view that democratic social institutions must be structured in a way that realises autonomy.¹²⁷

Conceived in such a manner, Hegel and Dewey anticipate what Honneth, following Talcott Parsons, calls a “relational institution”:

[Relational institutional] systems of action must be termed ‘relational’ because the activities of individual members within them complement each other; they can be regarded as ‘ethical’ because they invoke a form of obligation that does not have the contrariness of a mere ‘ought’, without, however, lacking moral consideration. The behavioural expectations that subjects have of each other within such ‘relational’ institutions are institutionalised in the shape of social roles that normally ensure the smooth interlocking of their respective activities. When subjects fulfil their respective roles, they complement each other’s incomplete actions in such a way that they can only act in a collective or unified fashion. The reciprocally

expectable behaviour bundled in these social roles therefore has the character of a subtle duty, because the subjects involved regard it as a condition for the successful realisation of their common practices.¹²⁸

Relational institutions, for Honneth, are required for social freedom: an agent realises their own individual purposes in and through social institutions in which they engage in mutual recognitive practices. The roles and expectations of relational institutions gain their power and validity from the kind of recognitive relations they promote and enable. As such, for a social institution to be a *relational* one, it must be wholly constituted by practices of communicative action, and it must promote and enable intersubjective recognition.

For example, consider the case of a queer Latinx, Esmeralda, whose participation in relational institutional environments enables them to identify that their self-realisation is best achieved through becoming an academic: to achieve a healthy practical relation-to-self through this career choice, Esmeralda's activities must take place in (a) institutional environments whose norms of gender, race, and sexuality are free from coercive ideology; in (b) institutional environments with educational opportunities; in (c) institutional environments with high levels of epistemic capital, such as significant expertise and discursive sophistication; and in (d) institutional environments which offer direct access to labour markets. For Honneth, the environment fostering and constituting relational institutions is distinctive, since

[a]s beings who are dependent on interacting with our own kind, the experience of such a free interplay with our intersubjective environment represents the pattern of all individual freedom: The schema of free activity, prior to any tendencies to retreat into individuality, consists in the fact that others do not oppose our intentions, but enable and promote them.¹²⁹

The sphere of *personal relations* (friendship, sexual intimacy, and family) is relational, insofar as it allows individuals to develop and pursue their needs, hopes, and dreams, through their intersubjective confirmation by friends, lovers, and family members. The *market sphere* is (putatively) relational insofar as it (allegedly) enables the realisation of individuals' own aims by institutionalising cooperation in the activity of meeting needs (consumption) and by institutionalising cooperation in the activity of recognising achievement (labour markets). The modern *Rechtsstaat* is relational insofar as it is structured to constitute a form of social freedom through its promotion and embodiment of democratic values, such as inclusion, equality, individuation, cooperation, consensus, and deliberation. To quote Christopher Zurn, "[t]hose institutional spheres must then embody practices of reciprocity and institutions of mutual

recognition. And they must provide the social context necessary for individuals to realise the diversity of their individual ends ‘in the experience of commonality’.”¹³⁰

(ii) If one interprets Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* and Deweyan democracy within the framework of relational institutions, then one can establish the second connection between left-wing Hegelianism and Dewey: under Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*, social processes and modern institutions are assessed in terms of how well (if at all) they enable the development of unique subjectivities that help individuals achieve self-realisation. For Dewey, social processes and institutions are assessed in terms of how well (if at all) they enable growth.¹³¹ The normative dimensions of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* and Deweyan democracy are, crucially, *critical*, in that they play an important role in revealing how current social institutions fail to be relational institutions, since they fail to promote practices of symmetrical recognition necessary for growth.

For, as Adorno writes, (viewing Hegel with equal adoration and contempt), “Hegel’s philosophy is indeed essentially negative: critique”.¹³² Emphasising the inherently critical nature of Hegel’s discursive resources, furthermore, enables one to recognise meta-discursive shortcomings of the liberal construal of Hegelianism, as helpfully expressed by Kevin Thompson:

[it] fundamentally fails to grapple with the deeper question: Does Hegel’s mature thought enable, even require, a critical role for reason, a foundation upon which it can set forth a political agenda and critique the social institutions and practices of its day?¹³³

I think an especially pertinent question now is whether in further developing the Western Marxist tradition of critical social theory, one should draw upon the conceptual resources of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* (and those of Deweyan pragmatist democracy) as prisms through which the (a) deficiencies of current social reality can be accurately described and (b) transformative visions of emancipation can be articulated. If one thinks one should do so, then one comes face-to-face with a significant barrier to such a project: the revolutionary kind of critical theory which questions whether Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* (and, crucially, Honneth’s critical social theory in *Freedom’s Right*)¹³⁴ can be regarded as a *genuine* critical social theory.¹³⁵

IV

Revolutionary Critical Theory and Hegelian Sittlichkeit as Ideology

Under Adornian critical social theory, all existing institutions and current discursive formations are fundamentally bad and ideologically perverted

through and through. Their “rational” structures are inherently pathological and totalising, rendering them ostensible barriers to autonomy. As Fabian Freyenhagen and Karen Ng respectively write:¹³⁶

on the basis of the ideology critique so important to the (first generation of the) Critical Theory tradition, [i]t does not follow from the mere fact that institutions guarantee some freedoms and people actively reproduce them, that these people think that the institutions are the best there ever have been; nor, indeed, that the institutions deserve the active support they receive. False consciousness can make us actively support what we would not so support, but instead oppose, if we were free from this false consciousness. The mere fact that a society guarantees some freedom does not suffice to show that it does not generate false consciousness.¹³⁷

When institutions fail to realise existing norms, these are viewed as deviations or misdevelopments from the ideal, but never as a sign that an institution is itself contradictory or unfit for the realisation of existing norms (let alone new norms or the reinterpretation of old ones). . . . This seems to go against key tenets of critical theory, and I would also note, nonideal theory, insofar as it disables the thought that the transformation of ideals and reality go hand in hand.¹³⁸

Both Freyenhagen and Ng correctly point out that there are substantive differences between the first generation of Frankfurt School Critical Theorists such as Adorno and Horkheimer and the third generation such as Honneth, who, given his Hegelian-Deweyan discursive orientation, “betrays a fatal tendency towards mere reformism”¹³⁹ in the eyes of Freyenhagen especially.

When one puts Adorno and Horkheimer (2002) in conversation with Hegelian-Deweyan theory, the substantive area of disagreement concerns whether the social pathologies endemic in modern capitalist society are essentially rooted in the logical structure of modern institutions. In other words, the question is: “Does modernity *become* subjecting, or has modernity *always been* subjecting?”

On the one hand, following Adorno, if modernity has always been subjecting, then modernity itself is inherently pathological, and its pathological qualities are due to its ideological genetic make-up rather than the background social forces at play distorting the norms of modern institutions thereby preventing those institutions from realising freedom.

On the other hand, if modernity becomes subjecting, then social pathologies are contingent features of non-progressive socio-political-economic arrangements, which are temporary (but nonetheless substantial) distortions of modern institutions normatively structured to realise freedom. This means social pathologies and misdevelopments can be agonistically overcome within those very institutions of modernity, because

there is – to use Honneth’s term – an untouched “normative surplus” in modernity, “the non-coercive power to assert a normative surplus exercises a permanent pressure that will sooner or later destroy any remains of traditional practices”.¹⁴⁰ According to Freyenhagen, Jörg Schaub, and Ng, it is the commitment to some type of immanent critique that renders Honneth’s neo-Hegelian concept of normative reconstruction as, at best, mere reformism, or, at worst, in league with ideology.

On this subject, for Ernst Tugendhat, the idea of viewing Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* as having genuinely critical orientation is mistaken, because “[the theory of *Sittlichkeit* lacks the conceptual resources to recognise] the freedom to be able . . . rationally to take a position in *opposition* to existing norms”.¹⁴¹ At no point in the *Philosophy of Right* does Hegel argue that citizens need to be able to engage in rational-critical debate in a quasi-Habermasian discourse-legitimation of the state, where citizens have the space and resources to publicly and agonistically test norms for legitimacy and validity. Hegel, moreover, unlike Kant’s explicit critique of logical egoism in the *Anthropology*,¹⁴² does not advocate freedom of the press (in part) as a vehicle for communicative action.

As such, for Tugendhat, since the theory of *Sittlichkeit* fails to question the whole horizon of modernity, by viewing all modern institutions as good and leaving little or no room for the development of a radically critical subjectivity, Hegelianism cannot be a critical social theory. Indeed, returning to the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel’s insistence in the following passage, as Kevin Thompson puts it, seems to mark “the eclipse of precisely this kind of project. . . , and we would search the entire expanse of his philosophical system in vain, it would seem, for a space for the classical evaluative function of reason. Is there any sense, then, in which we can speak of Hegel’s own critical theory?”:¹⁴³

philosophy is *its own time grasped in thoughts*. It is just as foolish to imagine that any philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as that an individual can overleap his own time or leap over Rhodes.
(EPR: 21–22)

Equally, Schaub has levelled serious objections to Honneth’s neo-Hegelian position in *Freedom’s Right*, such that Honneth has found himself forced to consider his status as a critical social theorist *simpliciter*, and to consider whether or not the neo-Hegelian framework of normative reconstruction has anything of meaningful import for critical social theory:

I find myself perceived all of a sudden as a staunch defender of the contemporary social order, having previously been understood as a radical reformer. . . . It is probably those objections of Jörg Schaub which initially gave me the strongest cause to doubt whether I could still understand myself as furthering the tradition of Critical

Theory. . . . He is convinced that my method of “normative reconstruction” makes it in principle impossible for me to continue to take up the perspective of “radical criticism” at all, as that perspective is constitutive not only for the original intention of Critical Theory, but for any use to which one would want to put Critical Theory.¹⁴⁴

Hegel and Honneth, of course, do not question the formal background of modernity, namely the idea that modern social institutions, in their actual states, help realise (social) freedom. Given this, however, I would contend that Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* is opposed, not to radical critique as such, but to *revolutionary* critique,¹⁴⁵ since, *contra* revolutionary critique, the *basic* form of the three freedom-enabling institutions of modernity is inherently *rational*.¹⁴⁶ As such, I believe the following by Neuhausser needs to be amended: “[i]t is easy to see how adopting a *revolutionary* [as opposed to ‘radically’] critical stance toward existing institutions is in conflict with the realisation of social freedom as Hegel conceives it, since doing so is incompatible with finding one’s identity within one’s social roles in the sense in which his theory requires”.¹⁴⁷

For Hegel (and Honneth), one cannot establish a meaningful or healthy practical relation-to-self independently of those recognitive practices provided by being in a family, having economic relationships, and being a citizen. This is not because one is reducible to a family member or to an economic kind or to a state-bureaucratic kind, but because the formal structure of modern institutions provides one with the symbolic and material resources to develop and articulate one’s practical relation-to-self. In this way, Hegel and Hegelianism *obviously* rule out the desirability of Robespierre-type revolutionary critique, insofar as revolutionary critique eliminates all existing institutions, leaving no trace of the *ancien régime*. Crucially, however, Hegelianism (if not also Hegel *himself*) does not obviously rule out *radical* critique as such.

To help clarify my proposed distinction between radical critique as such and revolutionary critique, which Tugendhat does not recognise at all, but to which Schaub *may* at least display some sympathy, I would like to consider the following example: the logic underlying the radical feminist (as opposed to the liberal feminist) critique of the patriarchal family is not predicated on any revolutionary loathing of the basic, non-ideological idea of a family. Rather, the radical feminist critique of the patriarchal family is predicated on the basis that the patriarchal, ideological structuring of family relations and the private sphere renders the family sphere as an iron cage of women’s oppression, mutating it from the family-*qua*-family’s *basic* lifeworld form as an intimate relational institution built on and sustained by love, empowering all members and helping realise their (Honnethian) self-confidence and practical relation-to-selves.

Construed in this way, I think Ng’s interpretation of the radical feminist critique is problematically phrased in her claim that “the rational and

optimal functioning of families was perfectly compatible with, and arguably even productive of, the subordination of women”.¹⁴⁸ The rational and optimal functioning of *patriarchal* families was (and still very much is) perfectly compatible with, and productive of, the subordination of women; whereas, the rational and optimal functioning of families-*qua*-families is incompatible with the subordination of women.

In this respect, then, Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* has the discursive resources to support radical (but not) revolutionary critique, to the extent that currently existing modern social institutions can be consistently substantively challenged (rather than merely and insipidly *resisted* or tweaked) to embody actuality. By embodying actuality, those institutions realise their normative function. To quote Michael Thompson, “Hegel’s thought is clear that . . . critique also helps us think about alternative ways of shaping social institutions and norms so that they can approximate the universal and objectify social freedom”.¹⁴⁹ And, as Karin De Boer helpfully articulates as well:

If these structures were embodied adequately in an actual state, citizens would have no reason to oppose the government and would of their own accord identify with the interests of the society as a whole. . . . Modern states might be defective with regard to the actual implementation of the structures and institutions that follow from the idea of the state, but not with regard to this idea itself.¹⁵⁰

Given this, I think Neuhouser’s following portrayal of left-Hegelianism is partly mistaken, insofar as it conflates “revolutionary critique” with “radical critique”, since while revolutionary critique aims at *obliterating* existing institutions, radical critique stops short of such *praxis*:

The task of social philosophy, then, would be to redesign social institutions through measures – for example, communalising ownership of the means of production – that would make identification with the social order, and reconciliation to the world, possible. This, in essence, is the Left Hegelian response. The problem with this position is that it both follows and breaks with Hegelian social theory in precisely the wrong places. In lieu of the more modest critique Hegel’s theory allows for, it substitutes a radical form of social criticism that seeks to obliterate existing institutions and replace them with the untried fabrications of utopian speculation. Hegel’s observation of the Jacobin Terror was sufficient to convince him of the danger and ultimate futility of this form of social critique. At the same time, the Left Hegelian position tends to retain Hegel’s eschatological faith in the achievability, in this world and in our own time, of a social order that is fully and finally rational. This position preserves the dubious Hegelian ideal of a social order that will satisfy, once and for all, the

whole of reason's demands; it diverges from Hegel's eschatology only in asserting that the perfected social order is just around the corner rather than already here.¹⁵¹

Furthermore, McGowan seems to make a similar – but potentially more embarrassing¹⁵² – mistake by characterising Left Hegelianism in terms of *revolutionary* leftism:

If Hegel's only legacy were that of the Left Hegelians, we would have to proclaim him a dead dog. . . . Left Hegelianism did not just throw out the baby with the bathwater but mistook some of the baby's essential organs for the bathwater. Though his investment in Christianity and the state has the veneer of conformism, it provides the linchpin for Hegel's theory of emancipation. Once one subtracts Christianity and the state from Hegel's thought, one loses sight of the freedom that his philosophy offers.¹⁵³

However, to complicate matters for my distinction between revolutionary critique and radical critique, in Honneth's rejoinder to Schaub's critique of normative reconstruction, Honneth notes the following about his neo-Hegelian framework:

it became clear to me how wrong (in the light of my own considerations) it was that I had not allowed in my normative reconstruction more institutional malleability in the gradual realisation of sphere-specific norms. If I had done this, it would have left open the possibility of dealing with cases of "institutional revolution." This consists in the possibility that the underlying norm of a particular sphere of action can only be realised in a more appropriate and comprehensive way, through a fundamental change of the institution that had previously been served to realise it. . . . However, in the course of the struggle of some groups, it may be made apparent that a more comprehensive application of those norms could only be achieved if the institutional forms of the relevant spheres were fundamentally changed.¹⁵⁴

What Honneth writes here, *prima facie*, suggests that his construal of *Sittlichkeit* is open to revolutionary critique. In response, though, I think Honneth's point is more subtle than this, since he qualifies the sense of "revolution" here, by emphasising that it is institutional, as opposed to *total*. I take such qualification to suggest that the critical aspects of *Sittlichkeit* are closer to radical critique than to Robespierre-style revolutionary critique. This is because the idea of an institutional revolution concerns forcing existing modern institutions to embody their normative promise, and in doing so become relational institutions. Such a move

fundamentally changes the existing normatively integrated sphere(s) of recognition practices, so that modern institutions are forced to become properly relational, and thereby enable the possibility of social freedom. To quote Lorde here, “[a]nd when I speak of change, I do not mean a simple switch of positions or a temporary lessening of tensions, nor the ability to smile or feel good. I am speaking of a basic and radical alteration in those assumptions underlining our lives”.¹⁵⁵

I previously claimed that, on the one hand, following Adorno, if modernity has always been subjecting, then modernity itself is inherently pathological, and its pathological qualities are due to its ideological genetic make-up rather than the background social forces at play distorting the norms of modern institutions thereby preventing those institutions from realising freedom. On the other hand, if modernity becomes subjecting, then social pathologies are contingent features of non-progressive socio-political-economic arrangements, which are temporary (but nonetheless substantial) distortions of modern institutions normatively structured to realise freedom.

Under the revolutionary critical theory of the first generation of the Frankfurt School, all existing institutions and current discursive formations are fundamentally bad and ideologically perverted through and through. Questioning the whole horizon of modernity, therefore, necessarily leads to one construing that horizon as essentially incapable of social transformation and that total revolution is the only viable option for the social critic. Any commitment to the basic institutional structure of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* will *always* be viewed by the revolutionary critical theorist as in collusion with oppressive ideology. To put this another way, a defender of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* may offer the most careful and well-supported reading of concrete universality/mediated unity as not supporting either directly or indirectly ideological oppression, but the reply will claim that, regardless of the intentions or competency of the arguments offered, the defender of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* will be deluding themselves if they think they can provide a vocabulary for discourse about modernity which does *not* perpetuate social domination of individuals, given how much language is saturated and pathologically infected by ideology. In this way, for example, Lorde’s Left-Hegelian claim that “unity is often misnamed as a need for homogeneity”¹⁵⁶ risks being met with derision from the revolutionary critical theorist.

However, why should the first generation of the Frankfurt School be seen as defining the terms of the tradition of Frankfurt School Critical Theory? If the first generation of the Frankfurt School defines the terms of the tradition of Frankfurt School Critical Theory, what this means for the category “critical theorist” is, for at least two principal reasons, rather concerning *on critical theoretic grounds*.

(i) Critics become reified, transformed into “natural”, hermetically sealed, fanatical cult-like group kinds. Such reification fosters eerie

pressures towards homogeneous identity-conformity and a purging of supposedly impure members should those members be critical of the revolutionary notion that all existing institutions and current discursive formations are irredeemably ideological. I am, therefore, sympathetic to Honneth's caustic critiques of Schaub and Freyenhagen:

we should no longer call for "revolutions" in the basic normative constitution of our societies. While we cannot rule out such fundamental changes taking place, any such revolution would have no capacity for moral progress, and hence nothing to recommend it. Rather, we can only usefully focus our emancipatory hopes on the "gradual" progress in the implementation of the already underlying principles of freedom in our societies. . . . He needs to show at least one plausible example of a way in which a "normative revolution" could take place without being owed to an innovative new interpretation of the principle of individual freedom (in its various forms).

it surprises me again how easily talk of "revolution" comes to the lips for some. . . . Both authors – Schaub and Freyenhagen – also consistently overlook my occasional references to market socialism as a possible and desirable continuation of the collective endeavour to further realise the underlying promise of social freedom in the economic sphere. To impose a "ban on graven images [*Bilderverbot*]" as Freyenhagen does, when he claims one must criticise contemporary conditions without a conception of a viable alternative, seems to me to be reckless and unfair. It not only sounds like an excuse for having no tangible conception of those social transformations one would like to bring about, but is also reminiscent of those vacuous speculations about a radically different world to come which Marx made such short work of.¹⁵⁷

(ii) Under revolutionary critical theory, the project of being at home in the world by revealing reason in the world is disastrously misunderstood as either endorsing social democracy, which renders the project normatively impotent, or speculatively justifying ideological and socio-economic subjection, which renders the project normatively blind and even reactionary.

Regarding (i), Arvi Särkelä and Justo Serrano Zamora correctly point out the general ideals of critical social theories:

Critical social theories are generally understood to be distinct from other normative theories by their explicit orientation toward emancipation: they not only present normative criteria for assessing the legitimacy or justification of social institutions or merely inquire into the actualised freedom of a given form of social life but claim to point toward a "freedom in view" – an end that might aid those

participating in social struggles to overcome the pathological, alienated, or ideological social order of the present. John Dewey's social theory clearly cherishes this ideal of social criticism. It contributes to a critical social inquiry in a variety of ways, some of which, so we believe, are still to be discovered.¹⁵⁸

Rather than retreat to any silos à la Freyenhagen, or limit discourse in such a way that critical social theorists compete with one another for the mantle of "Most Critical Theorist",¹⁵⁹ Särkelä and Zamora correctly point out that the significant difference between critical and traditional (in this case, liberal) theorists lies in how the critical social theorist *sans phrase*, unlike the liberal theorist, is concerned with understanding the nature of oppression and marginalisation and aims to articulate a progressively transformative and emancipatory narrative. To this end, then, by construing Deweyan democracy's concern for growth in relation to the Hegelian idea of a relational institution, Särkelä and Zamora offer a compelling reason to regard Hegel (as well as Dewey) as providing significant conceptual resources for the Frankfurt School Critical Theory tradition.

With regard to (ii), the normative dimensions of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* (and Deweyan democracy) shed important diagnostic light on a plurality of contemporary social pathologies and misdevelopments brought about by capitalism: this is because the normative dimensions of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* (and Deweyan democracy) are, crucially, of critical use, in that they can play an important role in revealing how current social institutions fail to be relational institutions, since they fail to promote practices of symmetrical recognition necessary for growth. Hegel (and Dewey) are not *as* critical of modernity as Adorno and Horkheimer (2002), but, importantly, this does not *eo ipso* disqualify their conceptual resources from either involving commitments to radical, progressive social transformation or being legitimately deployed in such a way to articulate emancipatory narratives. Furthermore, I think both would also endorse the following critique of neoliberalism by Honneth:

There can be no doubt that the current economic system in the developed countries of the West in no way represents a "relational" institution and is thus not a sphere of social freedom. It lacks all the necessary characteristics of such a sphere: It is not anchored in role obligations to which all could agree, and which interweave with each other in a way that allows subjects to view each other's freedom as the condition of their own freedom; it therefore lacks an antecedent relation of mutual recognition from which the corresponding role obligations could draw any validity or persuasive power.¹⁶⁰

Sittlichkeit's intimate relationship with relational institutions reveals concern about currently deficient social reality, namely that antidemocratic

trends gradually undermine the realisation of, what Horkheimer calls, an “*expressive totality*”.¹⁶¹ Unlike false totalities, expressive totalities involve a conception of a social whole in which heterogeneous (but not inconsistent) needs and interests of members of society are expressed and also fully developed and realised at no cost to social stability; if anything, the expression, development, and realisation of heterogeneous (but not inconsistent) needs and interests is required to avoid anomie. The consequence of a situation in which there is no expressive whole, but only a crystallisation into well-ordered homogeneous complexes under the steering mechanism of instrumental practices and unfettered market forces, is that the plight of individuality is almost hopeless. This is because the subjective and objective conditions for exercising freedom and achieving solidarity risk being eroded by increasing patterns of reification and social hegemonisation. These intersecting social pathologies are barriers to intersubjective recognition and the development of healthy subjectivities; in Deweyan terms, these intersecting social pathologies stunt *growth* and stultify self-development.

For Habermas and Honneth – in differing ways – the social pathologies and misdevelopments in advanced Western social democracies responsible for crisis situations are not embedded in the basic idea of modernity itself. The pathologies, misdevelopments, and relevant crises are due to either colonising encroachment of the communicative territory of the life-world by the steering power of instrumental practices, or by moral grammars which do not promote and sustain environments for intersubjective recognition. For Honneth in particular, since I have focused on his idea of a relational institution, the diagnosis is as follows: *social pathologies and misdevelopments of capitalism are largely produced in and sustained by non-relational institutional environments which themselves produce and sustain intersectional injustices and oppression.*

In some respects, my Hegelian socialist position questions the whole horizon of modernity that Honneth takes for granted. This is for two reasons. First, I am not completely convinced Honneth’s idea of “gradual realisation/gradual social improvement”, to which he is committed in *Freedom’s Right*, marks clear enough critical distance from the Whiggish articulation of the development of modern institutional frameworks, even though Honneth himself is desperate to not see his commitment to progress construed in exactly that manner. Second, unlike Honneth, who does not obviously appear to granularly detail those epistemic practices which contribute and help sustain relations of misrecognition and non-recognition, I would stress that modern Western societies, quite simply, have disgraceful and appalling habits of epistemic misrecognition and nonrecognition.¹⁶² This reveals how, in modernity, there is widespread, normalised virulent epistemic contempt for non-privileged groups: modern social institutions have substantive internal structural weaknesses; and modern social institutions often fail to encourage the quest for

self-realisation and thereby leave people who are epistemically oppressed and marginalised in a constant state of alienation.

For example, distress at systemically reproduced institutional racism and police brutality is often dismissed, to the extent that the vocabulary of protest against racial oppression is viciously misrecognised to the point of erasure. As Robert Gooding-Williams writes, the conservative and reactionary view is “a failure to regard the speech or actions of black people as manifesting thoughtful judgements about issues that concern all members of the political community”.¹⁶³ As part of the effort to explicitly challenge the reactionary socio-epistemic paradigms which construe antiracist protestors as public threats, Black Lives Matter demonstrations typically involve the chants “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot!”, where marchers raise their hands above their heads while chanting. To quote José Medina here, “[t]his slogan performatively challenges the misplaced presumption that demonstrators pose a threat to public order, interrogating the underlying narratives that depict them as such a threat, while invoking alternative images of peaceful expressions of group agency”.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, the chants “Whose streets? Our streets!” and “No Justice, No Peace!” are *deliberately* misinterpreted and misrecognised by reactionary groups to imply that the basic progressive claim “Black Lives Matter” is equivalent to “Black Lives Matter More than White Lives”. Crucially, this forms a significant part of the explanation for why #AllLivesMatter is in fact reactionary, since #AllLivesMatter reveals itself as either wilfully or non-wilfully ignorant of structural racism and systemic misrecognition.

However, what separates my critical theoretic approach from that of Freyenhagen’s, Schaub’s, and Ng’s Adornian preference for revolution is that I think there is compelling reason to suppose that questioning the whole horizon of modernity does not *necessarily* lead to one construing that all modern social institutions are *essentially* incapable of social transformation and that total revolution is the *only* viable option for the social critic: for the very development of a plurality of twentieth-century and twenty-first-century progressive movements to combat reactionary dispositions is part and parcel of, what I would call, “critical modernist” practices, wherein modernity is subjected to radical immanent critique to emerge out of a pathological state.

To put this another way, the advantage of subjecting modernity to radical immanent critique is that I think there are enough resources in the project of modernity to correct itself, since pathologies and misdevelopments in modern social spheres are contingent: intersectional injustices can be overcome not *only* by total revolution, but also through the development of a *radical form of deliberative democracy*, in which power is rooted in the communicative power of the lifeworld, especially a well-functioning public sphere. In this way, one can start to understand that “the realisation of reason in the world is not a fact but a task”.¹⁶⁵ Crucially, such a position is in no shape or form Panglossian in its social

theodicy. To quote Maurizio d'Entrèves, “[b]y confronting modernity on its own terms, rather than escaping into a nostalgia for premodern traditions, or enthusiastically embracing a technocratic vision of postmodernity, or invoking an antimodern conception of the ‘other’ of reason, [one] can thereby hope to redeem the unfulfilled promises of modernity”.¹⁶⁶

Traversing this “long march through the institutions”¹⁶⁷ is progressively transformative, because establishing epistemically and socio-economically just and mutual recognitive environments necessarily involves combatting and reversing the unofficial circulation of power in contemporary democracies. The unofficial circulation of power renders the social environment non-conducive to the development of a healthy practical-relation-to-self. In a “crisis situation”,¹⁶⁸ the flow of power can be reversed to its official state once the public become actively aware of its unofficial circulation. This form of consciousness reveals how one no longer deems current frameworks as rationally satisfying, thereby compelling agents to radically revise their sense-making practices for the purposing of achieving at homeness in the world:

The provision of this opportunity of [acquiring] knowledge has the more universal aspect of permitting *public opinion* to arrive for the first time at *true thoughts* and *insight* with regard to the condition and concept of the state and its affairs, thereby *enabling it to form more rational judgements on the latter*. . . . Just as such publicity provides a signal opportunity for these abilities to develop, and offers them a platform on which they may attain high honours, so also does it constitute a remedy for the self-conceit of individuals and of the mass, and a means – indeed one of the most important means – of educating them.

(EPR: §315)

Overall, I hope my arguments have provided an answer to Neuhauser’s challenge to left-Hegelians that “what needs to be demonstrated is that Hegel’s theory is able to accommodate a kind of social criticism that involves more than merely bringing existing institutions in line with their own immanent ideals but something less than a wholesale rejection of those institutions from a perspective external to the basic values they aspire to embody”.¹⁶⁹

Notes

1. See especially, Adorno (1993), Engels (1962), Habermas (1987a), Haym (1962), Popper (1966), Russell (1961), and Tugendhat (1986). See Jackson (1996) for a comprehensive set of references here.
2. “What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational. This conviction is shared by every ingenuous consciousness as well as by philosophy, and the

- latter takes it as its point of departure in considering both the *spiritual* and the *natural* universe” (EPR: 20).
3. Hegel himself was deeply hurt by the regressive reading of the *Doppelsatz*, and he played an active role in compiling a *Brockhaus Encyclopaedia* entry about him that denied that he ever meant “whatever is, is right”. Hegel was known to have endorsed the Prussian Reform Movement. Precisely because of this, many prominent reactionary government ministers viewed him with suspicion and frequently asked students to not attend his lectures in Berlin. Moreover, at one point during the height of the Carlsbad repression, Hegel himself was placed under surveillance. He had wanted to publish the *Philosophy of Right* in early 1819. However, he had curiously delayed the process after the Decrees had been issued. In 1820, Hegel added the Preface and made careful and furtive adjustments to the book, most likely to ensure it would not be censored. According to Karl-Heinz Ilting (1973: 45–66), the Preface’s polemic against Fries was principally included to deceive the censor. See Knowles (2002: 73) and Hardimon (1994: 29–30) for more on this topic.
 4. What is particularly interesting about this point is that there is quite a degree of irony here: at least traditionally, some prominent contemporary defenders of Hegel, such as Allen Wood (1990), Axel Honneth (2014, 2015), and Frederick Neuhouser (2000), aim to make sense of *Sittlichkeit* and its progressive political orientation independently of ascribing any substantive metaphysical commitments to Hegel’s social theory. This is despite how Hegel writes in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* that the concepts of the *Science of Logic*, “the entire speculative mode of cognition” (EPR: 10), are presupposed (cf. ERP: §33) and that “chiefly from this point of view [is the *Philosophy of Right*] to be understood and judged” (EPR: 10). However, Wood, in more recent work, appears to have recognised this point (namely Wood 2017: 83). See Ross (2008) and Thompson (2018) for comprehensive discussions of the implausibility of making sense of Hegel’s social and political theory independently of his metaphysics.
 5. Robert Stern (2006) is a very interesting exception, because although he opposes the reactionary reading, he equally does not endorse *any* progressive reading. In contrast to *both* critics and defenders of Hegel, Stern advocates a “normatively neutral” account of the *Doppelsatz*, one which construes Hegel’s vocabulary and interests in the Preface as *methodological*, rather than socio-political.
 6. SL: 11.369, 465. Cf. EL: §142.
 7. See Stern (2009, 2017).
 8. Cf. Foot (2001: 26–27).
 9. Stern (2017: 100).
 10. Neuhouser (2000: 258).
 11. Cf. the following by Neuhouser: “Despite Hegel’s reputation as an apologist for the Prussian state, the institutions he endorses are obviously not identical to those of nineteenth-century Prussia. It is precisely here – in the disparity between real (existing) institutions and those that are actual in Hegel’s technical sense – that the possibility for social criticism is to be found. For the theory of *Sittlichkeit*’s *idealised* account of modern social institutions provides us with the resources for seeing where existing institutions do not fully measure up to what they should be and for thinking about how they can be made to conform to their own (immanent) rational principles” (Neuhouser 2000: 257).
 12. Hardimon (1994: 27).
 13. Cousin (1866: 616–617).

14. Rawls (2000: 330).
15. Namely EPR: §199.
16. EPR: §185.
17. See Sayers (2011).
18. Namely EPR: §243.
19. Cf. Thompson (2015: 122). Cf. Pippin's notion of the "Great Devouring Maw" (Pippin 1997: 163).
20. Namely EPR: §244.
21. Pereira Di Salvo (2015: 102).
22. Namely EPR: §57.
23. Cf. Thompson (2015: 124).
24. Namely EPR: §244n1.
25. Knowles (2002: 289).
26. Sontag (2004: 8).
27. EPR: §244A.
28. YH: 329. Cf. HTS: 49. Viz. EPR: §198.
29. Knowles (2002: 292).
30. Herzog (2015: 148, 150, 156).
31. Herzog (2013: 59).
32. Winfield (2015: 145).
33. Bernstein (2017: 195).
34. In Giladi (2017), I incorrectly construed Hegelianism's leftist credentials in terms of a *social democratic* call for progressive correction.
35. Given this, I find confusing Todd McGowan's contention that "there is no discussion of mutual recognition [in the *Philosophy of Right*]" (McGowan 2019: 200).
36. Namely EPR: §258A; §260.
37. See EPR: §157–158; §181.
38. Namely EPR: §257; §260A; PoM: §535.
39. Patten (1999: 37). Cf. Pippin (1997: 73).
40. Cf. Thompson (2015: 119).
41. Neuhouser (2008: 223).
42. Molly Farneth rightly draws a distinction between the politics of recognition and Hegel's account of recognition: "Hegel's idea of recognition is not about the recognition of fixed *identities* but, rather, about the recognition of *subjectivities*" (Farneth 2017: 118). I would contend that there is scope for Farneth to be *more* critical about the politics of recognition and the claim that it is invariably committed to *reified* identities.
43. PT: 188.
44. Namely MSS: 132–133.
45. Cf. "[T]he self . . . is socially constituted through and through; it is not able, by detaching itself from particular life contexts, to step outside of society altogether and settle down in a space of abstract isolation and freedom" (PT: 183).
46. LW 5: 5.
47. Kadlec (2006: 530).
48. P&IP: 87.
49. Namely PS: §§177–178, 108; §182, 109.
50. Namely EPR: §57.
51. Neuhouser 2008: 209.
52. Cf. Patten's (1999) notion of a "civic humanism".
53. Hardimon (1994: 240).
54. Ibid. p. 242.

55. Namely “The emergence of poverty is in general a consequence of civil society, and on the whole it arises necessarily out of it” (EPR: §244n1).
56. Cf. Avineri (1972) and Peperzak (2001). Hegel’s discussion of colonialism in §§246–248 has been interpreted to mean that Hegel viewed colonial expansion as the solution to the problem of poverty in modern European states. However, Hegel rejects this “solution”, since the colonised countries will eventually demand and achieve their own liberation. As he writes, “[i]n more recent times, colonies have not been granted the same rights as the inhabitants of the mother country, and this situation has resulted in wars and eventual independence, as the history of the English and Spanish colonies shows” (EPR: §248A).
57. Lorde (1993: 112).
58. Knowles (2002: 290).
59. Ross (2015: 165).
60. E.g. hierarchical, bureaucratic structures of power and social relations, instrumental-formal rationality, etc.
61. Namely “Capitalist societies are distinguished from all others not by the problem of their reproduction, that is, the reconciliation of social and system integration, but by the fact that they attempt to deal with what is in fact the basic problem of all societies in a way that simultaneously entertains two solutions which logically preclude one another: the differentiation or privatisation of production and its politicisation or socialisation. . . . The two strategies thwart and paralyse each other” (Offe 1984: 85).
 Namely TCA II: 347. Viz. “The capitalist drive mechanism is protected and not altered by the interventions of the state. . . . Welfare-state mass democracy is an arrangement that renders class antagonism still built into the system innocuous, under the condition, however, that the capitalist dynamics of growth, protected by measures of state intervention, do not grow weak” (TCA II: 348; 350–351).
62. See Ross (2008: 119).
63. Cf. Jütten (2015: 194–195). Cf. Knowles (2002: 300).
64. Namely EPR: §253. See Houlgate (1991) for a defence of the corporations here.
65. Ross (2008: 8).
66. Thompson (2015: 117).
67. Ferro (2019: 233).
68. Rose (2009: 54).
69. To use a contemporary expression, the fetishisation of poverty, a common trope of social democratic thought and *praxis*, involves “poverty porn”.
70. EPR: 22.
71. Namely “When philosophy paints its grey in grey, a shape of life has grown old, and it cannot be rejuvenated, but only recognised, by the grey in grey of philosophy; the owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk” (EPR: 23).
72. Rose (2009: 88).
73. PDM: 27.
74. I.e. rational autonomy: “reason in the supreme seat of judgement before which anything that made a claim to validity had to be justified” (PDM: 18).
75. Ibid.
76. See T&P: 142–169.
77. PDM: 29.
78. Ibid.
79. Habermas (1985: 27).

80. PDM: 32–33.
81. Ibid., p. 31.
82. Ibid., p. 41.
83. Ibid., p. 34.
84. Ibid., p. 43.
85. Dallmayr (1997: 60).
86. PDM: 43.
87. Habermas uses the expression “philosophy of consciousness” interchangeably for “philosophy of the subject”.
88. Ibid., pp. 40–41.
89. Rorty (1982: 80).
90. Rorty (1991: 23).
91. Cf. “Hegel’s metaphysical mushroom has grown not in the gardens of science but on the dunghill of servility” (Fries 1970: 221).
92. PDM: 316.
93. Ibid.
94. Cf. “I use ‘metaphysics’ as the name of the belief in something non-human which justifies our deep attachments”. (Rorty 2001: 89), Cf. Rorty (2001: 90–91). For more on this tradition of criticising Rorty, see the following works: Alexander (1980), Bernstein (1980), Brodsky (1982), Edel (1985), Haack (1993, 1995, 1998), Sleeper (1985), Ramberg (2008), and Giladi (2015).
95. Sachs (2013: 700).
96. Dallmayr (1987: 688).
97. PT: 153.
98. Ibid., p. 161.
99. Cf. Pippin (1997).
100. Dallmayr (1987: 689).
101. There is an important qualification to make on the subject of Hegel and Romanticism. The German Romantics, as Beiser (1998, 2002) and Stone (2004, 2005) correctly note, regarded the modern era to have alienated humanity from the natural world and disenchanted nature. The Romantics believed that the Enlightenment had ultimately stripped nature and humanity off any beauty or real intrigue. As Frederick Beiser writes, “[Romanticism] hoped to restore the beauty, magic and mystery of nature in the aftermath of the ravages of science and technology” (Beiser 1998: 349). Furthermore, as Alison Stone puts the point, “[f]or Schlegel . . . humans ‘disenchant’ (*entzaubern*) nature if they perceive it as not at all mysterious but completely intelligible by reason. Conversely, humans would ‘enchant’ (*bezaubern*) nature by perceiving it as partly mysterious, not fully rationally comprehensible” (Stone 2005: 4). For Hegel, though, the Romantic appeal to mystery and rejection of reason is *just as pernicious as* narrow analysis. Therefore, Hegel’s “Romanticism” only consists in sharing the *broad* Romantic concern to account for nature in rich and enchanting ways. *Contra* the Romantics, Hegel believed that only a rich *conceptualisation* of nature will enable humanity to be re-enchanted with the natural world. Furthermore, Hegel should be seen as taking some distance from Romanticism, given his criticisms of certain ways of conceiving force, and also in how force is not as crucial for Hegel’s philosophy of nature as it is for Schelling’s philosophy of nature.
102. Cf. SL: 21.29–30; 25.
103. PN: §247Z, 206.
104. Pippin (1997: 171).

105. E.g. “To the extent that – to elude contractarian premises – Habermas stresses the rationality of cooperative will-formation (reflected in an ‘ideal speech community’), he merely appeals to a regulative principle which, in Hegel’s terms, remains on the level of an abstract ‘philosophy of reflection’. On the other hand, if escape from contractarianism is sought in a concrete ‘lifeworld’, recourse is taken to the same un- or pre-reflective traditions which were chided in Hegel’s early writings. Even when not returning to the *cantus firmus* of Enlightenment rationalism, Habermas’s proposal thus retains at best the *disjecta membra* of Hegelian philosophy” (Dallmayr 1997: 68).
106. See Fultner (2014).
107. Schubarth (1975: 256).
108. Mayer (1913: 16).
109. AT: 184.
110. Namely EPR: §§272–273, 283–329.
111. Neuhouser (2008: n226). Namely EPR: §138Z.
112. Cf. “[There is the noticeably] awkward contrast between Hegel’s uniquely democratic conception of human freedom, based on the key notions of mutual recognition and political mediation, and the much more conservative, not to say reactionary, vein of some of the central features of his theory of the modern state”. (Ferro 2019: 224). I also wish to note that this is not to say that Right-Hegelian positions are *completely incoherent*, but rather that they make a serious error in failing to sufficiently recognise the left-wing entailments of Hegel’s discursive resources.
113. Hardimon (1994: 246).
114. McGowan (2019: 80). I will return to McGowan’s reading of Hegel in the next section of this chapter.
115. HTS: 45. Another particularly evocative instance of the Janusian character of Hegel’s philosophy is (i) Hegel’s advocacy of a crass, patriarchal conception of gender-essentialised bourgeois family life excluding women from the economic-political public sphere (EPR: §166, §166Z), and the various ways in which (ii) Hegelian philosophical resources *naturally* lend themselves to post-structuralist varieties of feminism (viz. Butler (1997, 1999)).
116. See Brooks (2007) for more here. See Žižek (1989: 221–222) for a defence of Hegel’s commitment to constitutional monarchy as part of an emancipatory narrative. In the UK’s constitutional monarchical schema, where false consciousness is almost entrenched at every social level, one is technically a “subject”, rather than a “citizen”. This hardly amounts to genuinely democratic forms of association.
117. Hardimon (1994: 215).
118. Thompson (2015: 118).
119. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
120. Namely EPR: §311.
121. Farneth (2017: 120).
122. For more on Dewey’s relationship with Hegel, see Good (2005). Importantly, though, one should not lose sight of how, for all of the democratic *potentialities* in the model of *Sittlichkeit* that bring Hegelianism closer to Dewey, Dewey is critical of Hegel’s commitment to constitutional monarchy: “there can be no doubt that Hegel’s discussion of the internal organisation of the state is the most artificial and the least satisfactory portion of his political philosophy. He makes the ideal State most highly realised in the constitutional monarchy in whose structure simple monarchy, aristocracy and democracy are simply subordinate phases” (HPS: §124, 159–160).

123. Cf. "The idea of democracy is a wider and fuller idea than can be exemplified in the state even at its best" (P&IP: 143).
124. Kadlec (2006: 537).
125. RP: 16.
126. Good (2010: 86). Cf. "Dewey's thought appears to me to be a quite incisive reproduction of the core of Hegel's idea that progress in society always takes place when, through overcoming hitherto concealed forms of dependencies and merely external determinations, Spirit [*Geist*] – which is socially and discursively constituted – steps closer to a full realisation of its own nature" (Honneth 2015: 212).
127. Cf. Zurn (2015: 161).
128. FR: 125.
129. Ibid., p. 60.
130. Zurn (2015: 164).
131. See, for example, Joas (1993), Kadlec (2006), and the 2017 special issue of the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* on Dewey and Critical Theory.
132. HTS: 30.
133. Thompson (2019: 85–86).
134. Namely "Honneth in *Freedom's Right* does not think of social pathologies and other social aberrations as indicting our social world in such a way that revolutions are required to address them. Rather, they are now understood on the model of an immanent critique with a reformist orientation: as deviations from norms that are already embedded in the social fabric and that could be realised without fundamental changes to it" (Freyenhagen 2015: 143).
135. Though I do not have the space to discuss the following issue in any real depth, it is crucial to note that any defender of Hegelianism as critically oriented must face up to the additional, and arguably more complicated, charges that Eurocentrism and racism in general are structurally embedded throughout *every* level of Hegelian philosophical commitments. In other words, the charges levelled at Hegel by postcolonial theorists and decolonial thinkers are that imperialism, Eurocentrism, and racism are part of the genetic make-up of civil society, sublation, the dialectic, reason, freedom, and modernity itself. Crucially, the respective postcolonial and decolonial critiques of Hegelianism reject the quasi-apologetic "child of his time" position, which deems the racist parts of Hegel's anthropology (as detailed in his philosophy of subjective spirit) and his excessive Eurocentric and Orientophobic commitments in the philosophy of world history as an accidental, contingent, and unfortunate tainting of Hegelianism by a generally xenophobic and ethno-supremacist nineteenth-century German *Zeitgeist*. See, for example, Tibebu (2011), Ciccariello-Maher (2016), Parks (2013), and Habib (2017) for more on this subject.
136. Schaub (2015) is arguably even more hostile to Honneth.
137. Freyenhagen (2015: 141).
138. Ng (2019: 801).
139. Honneth (2015: 213).
140. FR: 164.
141. Tugendhat (1986: 311).
142. Namely APPV: 128–129. Cf. "An external mark or an external touchstone of truth is the comparison of our own judgements with those of others,

because the subjective will not be present in all others in the same way, so that illusion can thereby be cleared up. The *incompatibility* of the judgments of others with our own is thus an external mark of error and is to be regarded as a cue to investigate our procedure in judgement, but not for that reason to reject it at once" (LL: §57, 563).

143. Thompson (2019: 84).
144. Honneth (2015: 205–206).
145. See the following by Schaub on the idea of revolutionary critique/revolutionary progress: "Revolutionary progress has to be distinguished from gradual progress because in the former case we are not dealing with processes that lead to a more adequate interpretation and comprehensive realisation of norms already underlying existing, reproductively relevant social institutions. Rather, norms that are operative in reproductively relevant social institutions are abandoned in a normative revolution and different norm-institution complexes, that is, new institutions with new underlying norms, are established in the void left behind. Progress here is not gradual" (Schaub 2015: 114). Cf. Wellmer (2014).
146. Cf. "Hegel is not at all disturbed – and neither should we be – by the thought that the lives individuals will come to want for themselves will display a high degree of conformity to established norms in the broad sense that most will aspire to establish a family, to seek fulfilment in a career, and to have some part in their nation's cultural and political life" (Neuhouser 2000: 268).
147. Neuhouser (2000: 265).
148. Ng (2019: 809).
149. Thompson (2015: 129).
150. De Boer (2018: 148–149).
151. Neuhouser (2000: 273–274).
152. McGowan appears to conflate "Marxism" with "the Soviet Union" throughout his book.
153. McGowan (2019: 2–3).
154. Honneth (2015: 208).
155. Lorde (1993: 127).
156. Ibid., p. 120. Cf. "unity does not mean unanimity" (Lorde 1993: 136).
157. Honneth (2015: 210–211, 213).
158. Särkelä and Zamora (2017: 213).
159. Cf. "too often our forums for debate became stages for playing who's-Blacker-than-who or who's-poorer-than-who games, ones in which there can be no winners" (Lorde 1993: 137).
160. FR: 176.
161. For more on this, see Jay (1984).
162. See Dotson (2011, 2012, 2014a, 2014b), Giladi (Forthcoming 2020b), Jackson (2018), Maitra (2009), and Mills (2007).
163. Gooding-Williams (2006: 14).
164. Medina (2018: 12).
165. Marcuse (1955: 26). On this subject, I find the following from Habermas rather curious, insofar as it can be very reasonably read as directly contravening his postmetaphysical framework: "Reason is by its very nature incarnated in contexts of communicative action and in structures of the lifeworld" (PDM: 322).
166. d'Entrèves (1997: 4).
167. STPS: 210.

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8 The Passionate Nature of Freedom

From Hegel to Dewey and Adorno; From This to *Another Country*

Federica Gregoratto

I cannot be free alone. My fellow human beings have to be free as well to allow and help me become free. Objective, social conditions that enable and guarantee the freedom of potentially everyone must be in place. But what if these social conditions are deficient or missing? How to break free from a condition of unfreedom? These are among the central and most thorny issues that worry social philosophers indebted to the thought of Hegel, especially those affiliated to the Frankfurt School tradition of critical social theory as well as John Dewey. In this chapter, I argue that the critical, emancipatory aspect of the Hegelian notion of freedom, namely *social freedom*,¹ is in need of further investigation and elaboration. The process through which individuals and communities become free, namely the process of actualisation of freedom more generally, can be fully elucidated only by considering and understanding the sensuous, somatic, affective dimension. I want to suggest that human freedom is not only activity. Crucially, human freedom does at the same time involve moments or phases of *passivity*. We are not free simply insofar as we do something, or to the extent to which we are in the position of doing something. Our social freedom curiously requires that we “undergo” particular experiences,² that we are led by “forces” we cannot and should not (entirely) control.

My argument unfolds in three steps: (i) I reconstruct and reformulate the idea of social freedom against the background of competing notions. I distinguish and bring together negative and positive, as well as individual and collective understandings of freedom, highlighting freedom’s *processual* but also *conflictual* character: rather than being free as a static condition or as a point of arrival, we should consider ourselves, in our both personal and collective undertakings, as constantly striving for freedom in relation with and together with others. Sometimes, these relations turn conflictual. (ii) After sketching out the ways in which recent philosophical contributions have been trying to “naturalise” freedom, I expound on an argument that Adorno in *Negative Dialectics*

develops against the Kantian conception of autonomy and apply it to Hegel's notion of social freedom as well. Adorno's argument calls our attention to the *impulsive*, or affective components of freedom, thus highlighting what can be considered its *negative nature*. (iii) I then concentrate on some passages from James Baldwin's *Another Country* (1962), a novel that powerfully articulates a critique of social oppression (unfreedom) based on an intersection of sexuality and race norms. I concentrate on Baldwin's depiction of passionate or erotic love, in particular, as passionate or erotic love is a phenomenon that turns out to be particularly revealing when illustrating my revised notion of social freedom.³

I

Breaking Free, Becoming Free

What is freedom? As John Dewey puts it, this "is a word applied to many things of varied plumage and that it owes much of its magic to association with a variety of different causes".⁴ Tentatively, one can distinguish, first, between negative and positive freedom;⁵ and, second, between individual and collective freedom. In an initial move, *individual negative* freedom might be defined as *unhindered activity*: A person is free if she has the capacity (power) and the concrete possibility to do anything that she wishes to do, but also to feel what she feels and to express her feelings in any way she wishes to do so.

As both Hobbes and Freud knew, however, such a conception is naïve, or dangerous, as it conflates with the civic, political, and societal state of living in common. Certain limitations to freedom must be introduced. A revised conception of individual negative freedom, then, is *uncoerced activity and feeling*: A person is free if and only if she can pursue actions and express feelings without being coerced or interfered with in unjustified manner.⁶ Justified coercions are those that guarantee that individuals do respect each other with their actions and emotions, namely that they do not interfere with each other's negative liberties and do not jeopardise political and social institutional arrangements aimed at precisely protecting these liberties.

A different and interesting version of individual negative freedom is proposed by Jean-Paul Sartre (1984), who emphasises the activity through which every individual *overcomes her own given limitations* (biology, history, family, class, culture, geography, etc.). Contrary to Hobbes and Freud, the "original", "natural" state is in Sartre's view not one of boundless liberty that must be curbed to establish decent social and political forms of associations and institutions. For Sartre, the "natural condition" is viscous, binding, and suffocating and must

be continuously worked out and transcended to realise human beings' most intimate and precious vocation, their freedom. Simone de Beauvoir greatly exemplifies this conception by illustrating *women's condition*.⁷ In a much more Hegelian vein, she ameliorates Sartre's individualistic perspective by showing how intersubjective connections – bonds of solidarity, trust, care – are paramount to empower the individual in her struggle against given, unsatisfactory realities.

Crucially, however, negative freedom is not the prerogative of individuals. In Philip Pettit's neo-republican view, for instance, freedom is understood as *non-domination*, and it is something that also collectivities, especially political ones, can and must have.⁸ Not being subjected to some external arbitrary power, or better said, not even being susceptible to such power,⁹ is what makes a "people", the citizens of a state, free. The collectivisation of the notion of negative freedom, however, must be extended beyond national discourses as well. On his account, one might also think of the (social) group of women as being, as a group, dominated by men, and thus unfree.¹⁰

Positive understandings of freedom are not much interested in a defence or protection from external, negative agents, or in negating existing conditions. Rather, they draw attention to those positive powers human beings possess to know and master themselves, to understand what they truly want and feel, and to determine their own lives and environments in accordance with their desires and projects. This conception of freedom as well comes both in *individualistic* and *collectivist* terms; furthermore, it can assume moral or ethical-political connotations. Positive individual freedom is often thought of as *autonomy*. In its moral, predominantly Kantian version, it corresponds to the capacity to give oneself the norms that ought to be endorsed and followed. Liberation from inclinations (natural determinations, passions) is a prerequisite. Many contemporary analytic post-Kantians have, moreover, remarked how autonomy in this sense is not a solipsistic enterprise; it implies accountability to others, intersubjectively shared commitments to norms and recognition of each other as moral capable agents.¹¹

In a non-moral sense, positive freedom might be understood as authentic self-determination.¹² From an ethical, but also existential, perspective, it corresponds to individual self-realisation, in which one comes to see what her true wishes and desires are, what the projects are, and more generally, forms of life worth pursuing, and (try to) fulfil and realise them. One can add that self-realisation requires also to understand and articulate one's own emotions, and to act according to such understanding.¹³ But there is also political collective freedom: for Hannah Arendt, collective freedom corresponds to a form of power exercised "in concert" with others.¹⁴ Such a collective power might have revolutionary consequences, create something radically new, as for instance, and paradigmatically, a new constitution and political form.¹⁵

Hegelian, or *social freedom*, has the ambition to think together most of the aforementioned conceptions.¹⁶ It does not cherish solely individual or political independence; it focuses more expansively on human relations of interdependencies. It is important to stress that social freedom is individual and collective *at the same time*. For, on the one hand, individual self-realisation and flourishing is enabled by the aid, support, and affirmation provided by other human beings and institutions; our relations of dependence enable, namely our individual freedom.¹⁷ Political self-determination as well is possible not only when imposing one political will against other political actors, but only thanks to cooperation with others and as result of others' recognition. Moreover, we can realise our freedom also by acting (and feeling) *together* with others, as a *we*, as a collectivity.

Social freedom is actualised, according to one of the latest definitions provided by Axel Honneth, when "multiple subjects carry out uncoerced actions, which reciprocally complement one another and thus enable free collaboration".¹⁸ Crucially, though, the *we* that acts freely is *not homogeneous*: the purposes of the collective action are *continuously renegotiated* by valuing the contribution of the different aims, deeds, and perspectives composing the group.¹⁹ Individuals' pursuing of goals, actions and expressing points of view remain possible only thanks to interactions with others, and as part of communal action. Individual negative freedom is presupposed and does not disappear. As the reference to "uncoerced" action suggests, moreover, the negative freedom of the collectivity must be in place as well.

Certain objective, structural conditions are paramount for the unfolding of social freedom.²⁰ Dewey poignantly states that the possibility of freedom is "one with our individuality, our being *uniquely what we* are and not imitators and parasites of others. But like all other possibilities, this possibility has to be actualized; and, like all others, it can only be actualized through interaction with objective conditions".²¹ This refers to Hegel's doctrine of *Sittlichkeit*, the ensemble of practices, norms, laws, habits, and institutions that make the social context inhabited by individuals into an ethical one:

The *right of individuals* to be *subjectively determined* as free is fulfilled when they belong to an actual ethical order, because their certainty of their freedom finds its truth in such an objective order, and it is in an ethical order that they are actually in possession of their *own* essence or their inner universality.

(EPR: §153)

Individuals can realise what they truly are, their unique inner determination (essence, inner universality) only if they feel themselves at home in their social world; if they have good reasons to feel this way; and if the

social world can be truly assessed as their home. Freedom exists not only inwardly but also externally in existing practices, norms, laws, habits, and institutions.

Now, the most common issue that arises when adopting a critical theoretic perspective would invariably involve the following type of question: “*What about a social context that cannot be deemed as (completely) rational in a Hegelian sense? Individuals who, as social agents in their environments, cannot identify themselves with rational practices, norms, laws and institutions, who do not (and should not) feel at home in their world, are not free. But can they, as unfree, or not completely free beings, struggle to achieve social freedom?*”

In what follows, I cast the critical theoretic problem here by concentrating on the question of social transformation, and more precisely transformation of unfree conditions, rather than on the question of rational criteria. I will not ask, that is, when and why should we criticise a specific social context for not corresponding to objective freedom, or look for the criteria on the basis of which we can assess a social context as enabling objective freedom. Rather, I am interested in the question of *how a social context can change in order to come to realise objective conditions for freedom*. I argue that a conception of social freedom must encompass also the processes through which unfree practices, norms, laws, habits, and institutions lose their authority and grip on people’s lives: where unfree practices, norms, laws, habits, and institutions are dismantled and overcome; where new practices, norms, laws, habits, and institutions emerge, enabling a higher degree of social freedom. The processes of liberation or emancipation from unfree conditions and the processes of creation of free ones belong to the actualisation of social freedom.²²

This *processual* character is convincingly conveyed by Dewey, for whom freedom is not only a state, or merely the *result* of a process;²³ it rather consists in “something which comes to be, in a certain kind of growth; in consequences, rather than in antecedents. We are free not because of what we statically are, but insofar as *we are becoming different* from what we have been” (Dewey [1928] 2008: 108, my italics). Note that, for Dewey, the objective conditions enabling processes of freedom are not and cannot be fixed and defined once and for all. Part of the objective conditions conducive to freedom is what Dewey calls *uncertainty*:

[I]f change is genuine, if accounts are still in process of making, and if objective uncertainty is the stimulus to reflection, then variation in action, novelty and experiment, have a true meaning. . . . A world that is at points and times indeterminate enough to call out deliberation and to give play to choice to shape its future is a world in which will is free.

(Dewey [1922] 2008: 212–213)

If we consider freedom as a process, we have also to account for its conflictual, agonistic character. The problematisation of and attempts to revise existing, unfree norms, laws, habits, and institutions are described by Dewey²⁴ as resulting from struggles between social groups. More precisely, conflicts arise when subordinated groups begin to demand public recognition of their needs, wishes, interests, identities, and conceptions of the public good.²⁵ Demands of this sort can manifest themselves, penetrate into the public sphere, and provoke regenerative turmoil *partly* by virtue of the agency of the social groups advancing such demands. However, objective conditions have to be in place as well, and these can be deemed, among other things, as *conditions of instability and shakiness*: the purpose, meaning, and efficiency of existent norms, laws, habits, and institutions must have begun to totter, revealing insufficiencies, problems, and flaws. When freedom is not (perceived as) objectively guaranteed anymore, margins for transformative action take shape.

By gaining public recognition, and thus (partially) changing the given structures and dynamics of human association, the subordinated groups come to actualise their collective freedom; at the same time, the whole association becomes objectively *more* free. From an individual point of view, moreover, one can say that disruptions and transformations of given unfree conditions arise when individuals do not *feel* themselves at home in their social world (anymore); when they realise that their emotions, impulses, bodily desires, and affects are not properly respected, welcomed, and cherished in and through existing practices, norms, laws, habits, and institutions – *although they should be*. Such a subjective, emotional perspective is not meant to introduce an antinomial relation between individual and society *qua* conflictual axis. Dewey is, therefore, right to defend the thesis that conflicts and consequent changes are always operationalised on a group level.²⁶ Feelings of emotional alienation²⁷ in society, however, might constitute a powerful motivator for assembling collectives eager to struggle and for engaging in group actions.

II

The Negative Nature of Freedom and Its Affective Character

In this chapter so far, I have focused solely on objective *social* conditions. However, what about the place and role of *nature* in the debates around freedom? Theorists of negative liberty and (neo)republicans tend to ignore nature and its role here. Conversely, Sartre and, more ambiguously, Beauvoir take nature to be part of those immanent situations that freedom exercises strive to transcend.²⁸ Arendt believes freedom can manifest itself solely in the public, political realm, which is to be programmatically thought of as independent from material and natural worries. Conceptualisations of positive freedom as ethical and political

self-determination as well largely ignore *natural* conditions: when trying to decide which is the form of life that is worth living, as individuals and/or as collectivities, it would not be difficult to see how biological, neurological, chemical, physiological, environmental, geological, and other factors could play a role in orienting our preferences, inclinations, tastes, and material arrangements. However, these factors are not systematically taken into account. In the Kantian tradition, especially freedom as (moral) autonomy is achieved, to put it bluntly, *outside of the realm of nature*. Some Hegel scholars have a similar attitude towards freedom. To quote the title of a 2002 paper by Robert Pippin, the processual character of Spirit, namely the actualisation of freedom, unfolds by “leaving nature behind”.

Recently, however, theorists have convincingly put in question the ways in which Post-Kantians have dismissed the meaning and role of nature for a free society. Two conceptual strategies for integrating nature within freedom stand out: The first pivots around the notion of habit, habituation. The core of the argument consists in stressing how becoming free requires the formation of (good) habits. Habit can be defined as a “spiral of first and second nature”,²⁹ in which natural impulses are molded into recurrent, effective, and reasonable modalities to interact with other human beings in different social spheres and with natural and social environments more broadly conceived. By drawing upon Dewey’s reading of Hegel, Steven Levine helpfully clarifies how Hegel’s goal is “not just freedom as articulated by the state or the other institutions of Objective Spirit, but a free natural life, one where nature is no longer seen as ‘external’ or a ‘limit’ on our freedom, but as the very form ‘in which spirit realises itself’. It is in habit that Spirit realises itself in nature”.³⁰

The second strategy retrieves a notion that has been until now rather unappreciated by Hegel scholars, namely *concrete freedom*. In light of this notion, nature is regarded, in short, as a condition of possibility for the *unfolding* of freedom. Loughlin Gleeson and Heikki Ikäheimo, in particular, use this idea to critique Pippin’s conception of Hegelian freedom as “socially mediated rational self-determination”.³¹ According to Pippin, freedom would result from the interaction of mutually recognising agents, “whose reflexive participation in the everyday justificatory procedure of reason-giving and reason-exchange represents the means by which the normative standards for collective beliefs and practices can be secured within a particular, historically situated society”.³² One goal of Pippin’s reading³³ is to purify Hegelian freedom of any internal-natural factors (body, somatic habits, first-order motivations), thus establishing a *reflexive distance* from our subjective affective nature, but also to achieve a greater independence from external nature, both first (the material conditions of our form of life) and second nature (the historically developed customs and habits).

Gleeson suggests, on the contrary, to interpret freedom for Hegel as, to begin with, being “at home” in nature (PoM: §384Z). Concrete freedom, an instance of “unity of unity and difference”, amounts then to a “genuine reconciliation with those others – nature, other persons and social-institutional reality – upon which one is necessarily dependent”.³⁴ Internal freedom, which is of most interest for my arguments in this chapter, has many facets: it encompasses the pre-intentional, embodied self, or soul (*Seele*), initially undifferentiated states such as sensations, feelings, and “bodiliness” that are subsequently ordered and cultivated by habits,³⁵ but also various modalities of higher-order cognitive and volitive intentionality, namely desire, and their psychologically enabling capacities, or drives.³⁶ Crucially, internal nature plays out in intersubjective relationships as well: these are relations of recognition that cannot be thought of in disembodied, purely normative terms, but do involve axiological and affective components.³⁷

The reference to internal nature in Hegel allows one to flesh out the *emotional* dimension of freedom that I have tried to emphasise in the previous section, thus correcting and enriching the usual ways in which such accounts are presented. Most discussions around freedom concentrate on deeds and agency. When feelings, passions, and emotions are considered in relation to freedom, they are deemed as its opposite: a person who is lingering on her emotions and feels overwhelmed by them cannot be free – this is a common assumption. In my view, however, bodily emotional expressions and manifestations as well as the elaboration and articulation of emotions do directly concern freedom. I have stressed that a person is negatively free if and only if she has the capacity and the possibility also to feel what she feels and to express her feelings in the ways she wishes to (given certain limitations); that positive freedom, or self-determination and self-realisation require also the power to know, master, and adequately articulate and develop one’s own emotions.³⁸ Moreover, I have suggested that subordination of social groups consists also in insufficient public recognition of their emotions, in a sort of emotional alienation in existing social norms and institutions.

Now, concrete freedom designates a positive, reconciled relation with such emotional dimensions – the *opposite* of alienation, in fact. As it is presented, however, concrete freedom indicates once again a point of arrival, an end state; it is encapsulated in a static understanding. But what if we are not concretely free *yet*? What is the role and dynamic of nature in the process of breaking free and becoming free?³⁹ In the wake of Adorno’s critique of Kant’s notion of autonomy, I now propose to speak in this context of the nature of freedom as a *negative movement* – the tension, the breaking with established social, ethical, political norms and patterns of feelings and action.

In “On the Metacritique of Practical Reason” as part of *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno resolutely aims to reveal the dialectical constitution

of Kant's idea of autonomy (moral self-determination). Briefly put, for Adorno, what allows us to be free, on Kant's account, is at the same time what oppresses us, what makes us obedient to and complaisant with given norms and social imperatives.⁴⁰ Acting freely corresponds to a form of action that must rely on the subject's identity with herself: the subject can affirm such self-identity when acting in ways that conform to the norms she has given to herself. As he writes, "[t]he subjects are free, after the Kantian model, in so far as they are aware of and identical with themselves; and then again, they are unfree in such identity in so far as they are subjected to, and will perpetuate, its compulsion" (ND: 299). Actions of this sort, moreover, must be self-conscious – the subject must be aware of what she is doing and why.⁴¹ But what happens when the subject does not want to, or does feel she cannot follow her own norms anymore? What happens with more or less intentional deviations from the self-identity model? Would discrepancy, non-identity, simply amount to unfreedom, or would it rather gesture towards a "larger" form of freedom? An "extended" freedom of the sort could, on the one hand, accept and incorporate moments of deviations, defection, and suspension of agency and intentionality; on the other hand, it could also run the risk of violating morality, disrespecting other human beings, thus jeopardising peaceful cooperation and the potential for intersubjective recognition and relations of solidarity.⁴²

Note that self-identity would require, as mentioned before, separation from the materiality, the body, the inclinations, hence from nature and subjective natural features. In Adorno's eyes, a disembodied, abstract, artificial subjectivity cannot but, in its striving for freedom, end up in a sort of inwardly-turned Weberian iron cage, forcing us to compulsively repeat the same moral and social patterns over and over again. If not embodied, and thus concretised, the freedom of self-identity is turned into unfreedom. There is notwithstanding a possibility of liberation from unfree Kantian autonomy, which lies in and is triggered (and pushed) by what Adorno calls an "*addendum*", a *somatic, impulsive moment*. The emergence and manifestation of the addendum signifies that the subject is not and cannot be, after all, identical with herself. A subject that tries to be free and that simultaneously tries to not fall prey to its dialectics, is a subject that acts in unpredictable ways, does not know exactly what to do, loses and abandons herself:

The impulse, intramental and somatic in one, drives beyond the conscious sphere to which it belongs just the same. With that impulse freedom extends to the realm of *experience*; this animates the concept of freedom as a state that *would no more be blind nature than it would be oppressed nature*.

(ND: 228–229, my italics)

The addendum is not the other of reason and agency; on the contrary, it is what connects the two poles of an impossible dualism: “[i]t is a flash of light between the poles of something long past, something grown all but unrecognisable, and that which some day might come to be”. (ND: 229) The addendum, however, does not simply unify or identify the two sides: activity and passivity, reason and non-reason, bodily sensations, impulses, and drives on the one hand, and cognition or deliberation on the other. The two poles remain deeply connected, but there is *tension* between them; each is not reducible to the other. Action, including and especially emancipatory and transformative *praxis*, “needs something else, something physical which consciousness does not exhaust, something conveyed to reason and qualitatively different from it”.⁴³

Is this Adorno’s critique applicable to Hegel as well? After all, Hegel’s conception of freedom does not consist in pure, disembodied, intellectual exchange of reasons, and in a cold, rational establishment of norms, neither in finding and realising ourselves in a world that we have brought up by making and following such reasons and norms. To be free, for Hegel, we have also to find and realise ourselves in nature – in a world we have not made up by ourselves. *This would imply freedom is not only about respecting duties, but also about the enjoyment and well-being that can be found in our ethical and natural life.* What is more, to be free, we need also to have internalised certain patterns of thought and action and be able to follow them in habits. Impulses, affections, and natural elements are not to be repressed or expelled but incorporated: they can work as motivation for ethical action and even allow it.

Adorno’s idea of the addendum, however, does not limit itself to bringing together, conciliating normativity and nature – although this is also what it does, as the “phantasm of reconciling nature and the mind”.⁴⁴ Such reconciliation remains though phantasmatic, always threatened by the possibility of disruption. The tension, friction, or even conflict between what is given, the impulses and affects we undergo, and what we as free subjects endorse and decide to do cannot be truly eliminated. Subjects, as Adorno writes, “are unfree as diffuse, nonidentical nature; and yet, as that nature they are free because their *overpowering impulse* – the subject’s nonidentity with itself is nothing else – will also rid them of identity’s coercive character”.⁴⁵ Impulses and affects, according to the Adornian reading I am suggesting, cannot just be completely molded into habits, incorporated into *Geist*, accommodated, tamed.⁴⁶ Impulses continue to signal and express that the subject, even a collective one, is more than it is, it is and can be(come) different from what it is: “[t]he basis of the aporia is that truth beyond compulsory identity would not be the downright otherness of that compulsion; rather, it would be *conveyed* by the compulsion”.⁴⁷

I take “compulsion” here to mean “being subjected to, passive towards the force that certain affects, impulses, bodily imperatives have on us”.

Rather than conceiving of passivity as the opposite of freedom, freedom is viewed as entailing those moments in which we let go of ourselves and our usual, solidified, unsatisfactory practices and reasons, forget and lose ourselves in ways that reveal the non-identity with what we are and with the ways the social context wants us to be. The power or force of our affects and desires can become a factor in the process of freedom: the somatic moments are not there to be shaped and “tamed” by spiritual practices, but also to challenge and transform the norms and structures that regulate and constitute the objective practices of a given society.

Moments and phases of negativity, interruption, disruption, challenge, and non-identity belong to the process of freedom.⁴⁸ These moments can account for the naturalness of freedom in a Deweyan sense of nature. In *Experience and Nature*, nature is intriguingly depicted as

an intersection of spontaneity and necessity, the regular and the novel, the finished and the beginning” (Dewey [1925] 2008: 270–271) . . . [something] problematic, undecided, still going-on and as yet unfinished and indeterminate. . . . For the immediately given is always the dubious; it is always a matter for subsequent events to determine, to assign character to. It is a cry for something not given.
(Dewey [1925] 2008: 262)

The affective aspects of freedom might then harbour not only the indeterminate, unknown magma of our impulses and desires, but also “hidden possibilities” and “novelties”⁴⁹ – the possibilities to establish new habits, practices, and institutions that have overcome domination, and thereby allow us to feel less emotionally alienated.⁵⁰

III

The Freedom of Passionate Love

On the basis of the argument presented so far, we can say that social freedom displays somatic, sensuous, and affective aspects: we become free (also) by letting ourselves be driven by uncontrollable dynamics (chemical, neuronal, physiological reactions);⁵¹ by listening to the pleasures and displeasures of the senses; by passively receiving others’ attention, recognition, touch, impulses, and inspirations; and thus by being affected by others. The negative nature of such sensuous freedom boils down to the fact that such natural aspects might sometimes intervene in disrupting our usual ways of being in the social world. This should open up the possibility to call into question and transform dysfunctional, unsatisfactory, alienating, namely unfree norms, habits, laws, and institution. Let me illustrate this in this section by considering experiences of passionate, erotic love.

In modern times, this type of love has been strongly associated with freedom. Individual negative liberty is, for instance, the paradigmatic form in which sexual love is practiced under the present conditions of neoliberal society: according to Eva Illouz's gloomy 2019 diagnosis, in the so-called romantic markets, social actors look nowadays prevalently for hedonic liberties. They pursue individual sexual and emotional pleasures without tolerating limitations and constraints of any sort, either those necessarily implied in loving long-term commitments. In a much more positive sense, Stanley Cavell shows on the contrary that successful love (and friendship) relationships are paramount in individuals' processes of self-understanding, self-determination, and self-realisation.⁵² Romantic partners (who are also friends) help each other grasp what the true nature of their desires are, what they want to be(come), and what they envision as a life worth living, on individual, ethical, and political levels. Paul Kottman (2017) also identifies freedom in love as the capacity, intersubjectively constructed and shared, to make sense of a threatening, mysterious world.

Love, including erotic and passionate love, appears then most paradigmatically in the explication of social freedom. As some have argued, the typical formula illustrating Hegelian freedom, "being-with-oneself-in-another", does appear as an actual, non-ideal and non-ideological possibility especially when considering interactions between persons forming (very) restricted and intimate social groups.⁵³ If one takes instead into account relationships between strangers, work colleagues, citizens, or human beings more in general, the suspicion of social freedom remaining a mere ideal, thus running the risk of reinforcing ideological constructs, seems rather legitimate.⁵⁴ One might certainly dispute the special place attributed to love and show how its freedom cannot but amount as well to ideality and ideology. For the purposes of this chapter, I contend to just assume that love and sexual relationships can represent a convenient "social laboratory" where, on a small scale, we can learn something about freedom more generally.

Hegel's references to romantic love that binds woman and man in the ethical context of the family represents a paradigmatic example of how social freedom develops by incorporating, shaping, and ordering (or even disciplining!) impulses and feelings. Sexual love (but also familial love between parents and children) is an immediate attachment, because it has its origin not in thought, which is mediated or reflective, but in "natural feeling".⁵⁵ As Neuhouser elucidates, the family qualifies as rational because "in institutionalising monogamous sexual love it enables its adult members to express one of the strongest of human drives in a way that is *consistent* with the actualization of freedom".⁵⁶ Natural drives and needs are not just compatible with freedom, but they contribute positively to its realisation: sexual impulses are those forces that bring two adults together in loving relationships and help to keep them united.

Within kinship of this sort, “the imperatives of nature are in a more complete harmony with those of spirit; natural and ethical demands are united, each reinforcing the other”.⁵⁷ There is here an “interpenetrating unity” of nature and freedom.

Impulses and drives, as Alison Stone writes, “should be cultivated to concur from within with the rational requirements which the will ‘determines’ itself to obey”.⁵⁸ The ethical framework of marriage (for example) does not suffocate sexual impulses, drives, or better said, feelings, but rather permits to draw out and reinforce the proto-rational element of mutual respect and commitment that are inherent in them.⁵⁹ The “transient, fickle, and purely subjective aspects of love”,⁶⁰ when anchored in the institutional setting of the bourgeois family, turn their “immediate natural determinacy” into a “substantial essence”.⁶¹

It is clear, however, how the ethical nature, the freedom namely of love, as expressed and made possible in and through marriage, comes to the fore only when a reconciliation with nature is possible. This means that the natural dimension of impulses, drives, and affects must be “transfigured” and “overcome”:

Marriage contains a natural moment. . . . [In it] the natural relation is transfigured into a spiritual one without being given up. . . . The ethical moment consists in nature being overcome. On the other hand, this natural relation is not to be regarded as something degrading or wrong, or as a defect one is subject to merely as a result of the imperfection of human Nature.

(Hegel 1983: 130–131)

The well-known formulation of freedom as “being-with-oneself-in-another” designates a *reconciliation* between self and other: an entity’s being “with itself”, and therefore self-determined, occurs in its necessary relatedness to another. Reconciliation works when the other is sublated, but not in a gesture of expulsion, dismissal, but one of incorporation: freedom is actualised not by separating from the other but by incorporating it.⁶² In the wake of Adorno, though, we have seen how the somatic moment cannot (always) be incorporated. Adorno does not exclude that insurgent impulses might eventually be accepted, cultivated, and made an integral part of our ethical life. The sense of his argument consists, I believe, in an invitation to deflect our gaze from the end-state, the moment of reunion, and to concentrate rather on the phases of friction, tension, and conflict between the (alleged) ethical order and the affects that resist assimilation, *because it is in these moments that spaces for critique and transformation might emerge*.

Let me illustrate this by deploying some of the narrative figures populating James Baldwin’s novel *Another Country* (1962). The novel can be very reasonably understood as a critique of the capitalist, sexist, and

racist norms and structures comprising the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, – the same society, by the way, which provoked Adorno's most negative critical diagnoses.⁶³ The "other country" of the title might be taken to refer to an alternative, (im)possible, utopian world in which its inhabitants could and would finally realise themselves and their desires – express themselves through their art without having to subjugate it to the necessity of profit, find a real, loving, caring, understanding connection with each other beyond racial and class differences, being respected and recognised as persons not only despite of, but precisely because of their "true" (sexual, racial) beings.

"Another country" is the country, in short, in which social freedom is realised. In an Adornian fashion, however, this country is not to be seen and experienced as a positive, but only inferred from damaged "configurations" of interpersonal relationships, in which Baldwin traces what Adorno calls "the ambiguity of melancholy".⁶⁴ The idea of "another country" can be referred to, in the Adornian terminology, as a figure "of the unreal"⁶⁵ that can serve as the "standpoint of redemption".⁶⁶ Towards the end of the novel, however, a light is shed on this world, on this country, "by redemption" itself: this is the moment in which two male protagonists, Eric and Vivaldo, discover their mutual sexual attraction and loving emotions for each other. *In this moment, a glimpse of a better world flashes, and we get to hope that cognitive and practical capacities for critical understanding and transformation can be developed and cultivated.*

In the novel, Baldwin presents the social wrongs – the *damaged life*, in Adornian terms – he intends to critique in the form of damages of love relationships, both sexual love and friendship. The main problem he detects is individuals' impenetrability, the trap of their enclosed subjectivity that does not allow them to see and perceive the world from other human beings' perspectives. This is particularly difficult, if not impossible, for white men or women engaging in relationships with black men or women, and *vice versa*. Moreover, the stigma and the fear of homosexuality prevent many men to deepen their friendship with other men.⁶⁷ Norms regulating race and sexuality intersect, in the novel, in ways that damage love relationships, and social relationships more generally.

Can such norms change? If they can, how exactly, though? The only tentative, provisional, partial positive answer to this question is conveyed by Vivaldo, a penniless young Italian American aspiring writer of humble origins who conducts a bohemian-style life in New York's West Village. In the first part of the novel, we see him struggling, unsuccessfully, to reach out to his best friend, the Black Jazz saxophonist Rufus. Rufus is having a hard time, unable to cope with the racism surrounding him. He is entangled with a white woman, whom he loves but cannot treat with the care and respect he knows she deserves. Eventually, he commits suicide. Vivaldo is, predictably, torn by a strong sense of guilt and despair

for not having found the words and the gestures to truly communicate to Rufus his love and friendship. His serious attempt to demonstrate to him, and to everybody else, that a new configuration of interracial relations is an actual possibility had failed. In following parts of the book, Vivaldo falls in love with Ida, Rufus's sister. Another chance is then presented to him. Painfully, despite his deep attraction to and admiration for her, he seems unable, again, to truly listen to and understand her, to hold her, to help in ways that would actually matter for her.

Things begin, or might begin, to change in the moment in which Vivaldo let himself be drawn by an unexpected passion for his friend Eric, a former lover of Rufus. The sex scene is narratively quite complex:⁶⁸ it starts with a dream, in which Vivaldo experiences pain and mortal anguish, but eventually sexually connects with Rufus. Slowly waking up from the dream, he senses his desire for Eric and Eric's desire for him – *as if his dreaming of Rufus would have the effect of bringing him closer to Eric*. At the same time, his sharing Eric's bed, in which he had accidentally passed out drunk the night before, brings him closer to Rufus in a way that had not been possible in real life. The first stages of their encounter happen in a half-conscious state, at least for Vivaldo, who just gives in to the new feelings of abandonment, “surrendered to the luxury, the flaming torpor of *passivity*”.⁶⁹ Vivaldo is abandoning something of his usual, old self: most notably, the character traits that are typical of a traditional masculine identity, as the necessity of being constantly active and in control.⁷⁰ He let himself be guided, possessed, acted upon – and not only in a sexual way. Note that the experience is not simply one of joy and pleasure. A chain of anxieties and worries crosses Vivaldo's mind and body; he is not sure whether the dream with Rufus has turned into a nightmare.⁷¹ The doubts, nevertheless, reactivate his consciousness and make him reach a new type of self-consciousness:

The dream teetered on the edge of nightmare: how old was this rite, this act of love, how deep? In impersonal time, in the actors? He felt that he had stepped off a precipice into an air which held him inexorably up, as the salt sea holds the swimmer: and seemed to see, vastly and horribly down, into the bottom of his heart, the heart which contained all the possibilities that he could name and yet others that he could not name.

(Baldwin 1993: 386)

Among the possibilities that could be named there is, some pages later, a reunion with his black girlfriend. For the first time, just after his sexual encounter with Eric, Vivaldo manages to have a deep, honest conversation with Ida that seems to finally allow proper sharing. This is the type of sharing that is possible, following Audré Lorde, in *acts of authentic erotic love*: “[t]he sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic,

or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference".⁷²

In this scene, interestingly, it is the sharing that happens, unexpectedly, between Vivaldo and Eric that is conducive to the change in the communication between Vivaldo and another character, Ida. As if the experience of finally giving in to queer desire, an experience of simultaneously joy and fear, dissolution in otherness and coming back to oneself, had roused in Vivaldo a heightened sensibility, and the cognitive and emotional capacity to take the other's point of view. As if passion experienced by the two men could not be contained in Eric's room alone, but had to propagate to other rooms as well, positively affecting other relationships, liberating potentials for deeper understanding, sharing, and loving more in general.⁷³

Note how the different conceptions of freedom that are here at play, how they nicely converge within the encompassing notion of social freedom. To begin with, Vivaldo does exercise his individual freedom: he pursues – albeit not consciously, not actively – his purely individual impulses, which are in a first phase indeterminate and confused (he did not, for example, identify himself as homosexual, he was not entirely aware of this nature of his desire). Note that it is while letting himself be driven by such affects that he starts to understand what he wants, both with Eric, and with Ida too. Self-determination is not what he has achieved yet, but the direction seems promising. Moreover, the sexual scene between Vivaldo and Eric is a nice illustration of what it means to experience freedom together, as a (very small) *we*. In the sexual union, which is an entanglement of activity and passivity, new possibilities arise for both of them – and for others. Finally, their passions-actions gesture towards new possibilities for society more broadly, they open up to the imagination of *another country*.

The novel's end is not necessarily optimistic, but it remains, at least, open: is Vivaldo, as a white man, finally able to comprehend the suffering of black people? Is Ida finally able to let her hate go, to allow to be seen and treated according to new patterns? Is recognition between them now an actual possibility? Without giving a clear answer, the novel shows how this type of recognition, necessary, in the Hegelian paradigm, for the unfolding of social freedom, presupposes and requires liberation. In this case, liberation from oppressive and alienating racial (and sexual) identities, from social structures that order and organise interpersonal relationships in ways that reproduce, if not reinforce domination, but also monogamous and heterosexual relationships patterns. *Liberation depends sometimes, certainly, on practices of reasons-giving. But sometimes it might also result from experiences of non-identity*, in which we are drawn far away from ourselves, in which we realise that we can be, and maybe already are, different from what we have been, both as individuals and as communities.

Notes

1. See Neuhouser (2000), Honneth (2014, 2017).
2. This blend of activity and passivity is what characterises Dewey's (Hegelian) notion of experience: "There is . . . an element of undergoing, of suffering in its large sense, in every experience" (Dewey [1934] 2008: 47–48). See Särkelä (2018) for further insights on this particular topic.
3. I have presented various versions of this paper at the *Love Matters Workshop* (New School for Social Research, New York, February 2019), at the *Feminism and Critical Theory Conference* (UWE, Bristol, May 2019), at the *Contemporary Relevance of Hegel's Naturalism Conference* (University of Parma, June 2019), and finally at the *Philosophy Colloquium in St. Gallen* (April 2020). Many colleagues have helped me with precious insights and comments; in particular, I owe warm gratitude to Borhane Blili-Hamelin, Michael Festl, Paul Giladi, Heikki Ikäheimo, Gal Katz, Lukas Peter, Arvi Särkelä, Susanne Schmetkamp, Italo Testa, Dieter Thomä, and Dagmar Wilhelm.
4. Dewey ([1928] 2008: 92).
5. Namely Berlin (1969).
6. Namely Hayek (1960).
7. Namely Beauvoir (2011).
8. Namely Pettit (1997, 2012).
9. Pettit does not identify his position as "negative" in Berlin's sense, insofar as, contrary to Berlin (and others), he considers the *possibility*, rooted in institutional and juridical settings, of interference (and not solely on actual interference) (Pettit 1996: 578).
10. On this point, see his reply (Pettit 2018: 115–118) to my criticism (Gregoratto 2018b).
11. E.g. Brandom (1979), Pippin (2008), Pinkard (2012), Giladi (2020a).
12. Namely Taylor (1985).
13. For a recent, compelling understanding of self-determination, see especially Rössler (2017), who (interestingly) presents her account as a theory of personal autonomy.
14. See e.g. Arendt (1970: 44).
15. See Arendt (2003).
16. Namely Honneth (2014).
17. See also: "Liberty is that secure release and fulfillment of personal potentialities which take place only in a rich and manifold association with others: the power to be an individualised self making a distinctive contribution and enjoying in its own way the fruits of association" (Dewey [1927] 2008: 329).
18. Honneth 2017: 182.
19. Cf. Arendt's conditions of "plurality" and "distinction" in the political realm, where power takes place (Arendt (1998)).
20. See Neuhouser (2000); Giladi (2020a).
21. Dewey ([1928] 2008: 113–114), my italics. See also Dewey ([1922] 2008: 210).
22. Christoph Menke (2017) also defends this thesis. However, in his view, the process of liberation or emancipation must remain a process of liberation from nature, not a process, as I will try to show in what follows, in which natural aspects play a positive role.
23. This seems suggested by Neuhouser: "freedom is always thought of as *the end point* of some process in which a being becomes constituted as what it is through its relations to an other and then abolishes the alien character of its other by apprehending it as identical to itself (in a sense in need of further specification), thereby becoming related only to itself" (Neuhouser 2000: 20).

- Honneth acknowledges the processual element of social freedom (Honneth 2017: 177–178) as well, but not as clearly as Dewey.
24. Namely Dewey (1973, 2015).
 25. See Honneth (1995), Särkelä (2013), Gregoratto (2017a), and Serrano (2017).
 26. Viz. Dewey (1973: 65).
 27. The concept of emotional alienation would deserve in-depth explanation. Here, I take it to indicate a twofold condition: (i) First, the condition of both individuals and groups who are painfully *aware* that their individual and collective emotions are not sufficiently taken into consideration or recognised on a social level; (ii) second, the condition of both individuals and groups who experience diffuse and vague feelings of discomfort and distress, which *depend* on the lack of public misrecognition or on invisibility, but cannot properly articulate and specify them. I will have to dedicate another paper to this concept; its starting point and inspiration is to be found in Szanto (2017), who concentrates more specifically on *self*-alienation. For another discussion of alienation that can be very useful in this context, see Giladi (Forthcoming 2020b).
 28. For both of them, however, it might be argued, affects, emotions, and desires must be assumed and owned to properly realise freedom (see, with regard to Sartre, Hartmann (2017) and Szanto (2017: 268); with regard to Beauvoir, Gregoratto (2018a).
 29. Namely Gregoratto and Särkelä (Forthcoming).
 30. Levine (2015: 651). On the central role of habit for Hegel's practical philosophy and social thought, see also Testa (2010, Forthcoming), Ranchio (2016), and Novakovic (2017).
 31. Pippin (2008: 21).
 32. Gleeson (2018: 217).
 33. Namely Pippin (2002, 2008: 46–58, 187, 192–194).
 34. Namely Gleeson (2018: 220). See also Ikäheimo (2011: 161), Gleeson and Ikäheimo (2019).
 35. Namely PoM: §41Z, 409–410. See Testa (2012).
 36. Namely PoM: §41Z, 413–482.
 37. See Gleeson (2018: 224).
 38. Such a relation between emotions or affects (and wishes, desires, drives, etc.) and what I call “positive freedom” has already been thematised by various authors in various ways; see e.g. Lear (1990), Frankfurt (2004), Rössler (2017). However, their positions tend to give a dominating role to reasons and to the active side of freedom.
 39. Gleeson and Ikäheimo know very well that we very rarely are concretely free; in fact, they take concrete freedom to be the immanent criterion to critically assess our societies. As mentioned before, I am not however interested in criteria, but rather in the processes through which we come to realise such criteria.
 40. Namely ND: 232. For a detailed and insightful discussion of the paradox of the Kantian notion of autonomy that in part echoes the Adornian one without referring to it, see Khurana (2013). Thomas Khurana, however, does not make any reference to affectivity or nature.
 41. Namely “The self-experience of the moment of freedom depends on consciousness; the subject knows itself to be free only insofar as its action strikes it as identical with it, and that is the case in conscious actions only” (ND: 227).
 42. One difficulty in the Adornian argumentation is that he conflates moral and social, political, ethical norms, which is something that Kant has good reasons to reject. Unfortunately, I cannot discuss this point here. Ultimately, I am not interested in discussing Kant, or in the plausibility of Adorno's critique, but only in *what we can learn from Adorno with regard to social freedom*.

43. ND: 229.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., p. 99 – my italics.
46. This is noticed by Menke (2017: 173–174) as well. For him, however, the fact that there is a natural rest that can never be eliminated remains a problem from the point of view of freedom; the inevitable conflict, or paradox, between autonomy and heteronomy is just the expression of the limits of autonomy, and not a possibility for a richer expression of autonomy. In my reading, on the contrary, certain experiences of heteronomy (affectedness, passivity) *might* contribute to the process of actualization of social freedom. At the end of his essay, Christoph Menke contends the “break with the social must also belong to liberation” (2017: 176); such a break, however, does not have anything to do with nature.
47. ND: 299, my italics.
48. Dewey knows this as well (1922: 209, 214).
49. Dewey ([1925] 2008: 28).
50. On the critical potential of this understanding of nature, see also Gregoratto (2017b, Forthcoming).
51. We can also intervene on these aspects of our bodies, we can control and steer our chemical, neuronal, and physiological reactions, today more than yesterday, thanks for instance to neuro-enhancing technologies. Some argue that, precisely when strong emotions are involved, such intervention do increase our freedom (see Earp and Savulescu 2020). I am not entirely against this line of argument; in this chapter, however, I argue that the process of freedom does *also* include embracing noncontrollable dynamics.
52. Namely Cavell (1981).
53. Namely Neuhouser (2000: 20).
54. See Ng (2018).
55. EPR §158. Cf. Neuhouser (2000: 135).
56. Neuhouser (2000: 169).
57. Ibid.
58. Stone (2005: 114).
59. Namely EPR: §161. Cf. Stone (2005: 115).
60. EPR: §161A.
61. Ibid. §19.
62. Neuhouser (2000: 19).
63. In what follows, I do not want to suggest in any way that Baldwin’s work and vision can be reduced to the Adornian framework. For the purposes of this chapter, however, a joint reading of the two authors can be useful. For more on Baldwin’s thought, especially in light of present-day critical social theory, see Glaude (2020).
64. MM: §78, 121.
65. Ibid. §78, 122.
66. Ibid. §153, 247.
67. Sexual relationships between women are not addressed.
68. See Baldwin (1993: 381ff.)
69. Baldwin (1993: 385), my italics.
70. See Gordon (2011).
71. Baldwin (1993: 386).
72. Lorde (2007: 56).
73. A few years before, Baldwin had described an opposite movement in his famous *Giovanni’s Room*: David’s incapability of loving Giovanni, the confinement of his (guilty) feelings within the narrow, stifling walls of his room, resulted in the erosion and ultimately violent destruction of his relationship with his fiancée Hella as well.

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Part V

Political Theory and Political Economy

9 Critical Theory and/as Political Philosophy

Jean-Philippe Deranty

I

The Critical Theory Project

To identify the many political dimensions that are inherent in the Critical Theory project, we first need to briefly recall its main features. If it is formulated in sufficiently formal terms, that project arguably remains consistent across its generations, beyond the many different methodological apparatuses that have been developed to realise it.

Critical Theory can be defined as an original intellectual endeavour that seeks to perform two tasks: (i) a *theoretical* task of description, comprehension, and explanation of social phenomena that is guided by (ii) a *practical* interest in emancipation, that is the realisation of freedom for all. Because the social phenomena described do not as yet allow every human individual to be free, the endeavour as a whole is a *critical* one.

The phenomena to comprehend and explain theoretically are those particular social processes and structures from which people need to be emancipated, because those particular social processes and structures are “negative”, i.e. *regressive* ones: they are structures of social domination that translate into forms of oppression and injustice and that also produce pathological forms of life. The double task of theoretical and practical study is to be pursued on two levels: at the *objective* level of *collective* organisation (which includes, for example, the economic, cultural, and legal sectors of society), and at the *subjective* level of the *individual* agents, inasmuch as social processes are reflected in, supported by, and in turn affect, the psychic structures and embodied lives of individual persons.

Crucially, the theoretical and the practical reciprocally determine each other. The theoretical inquiries are guided by a double impetus: a *critical* one highlighting all that is “negative” in current social organisation, and a *programmatic* one indicating the possible correction of these pathological and unjust social phenomena through a transformation of the social organisation. Conversely, a defining feature of Critical Theory is that

it makes the practical parts of its inquiries methodologically dependent on the descriptive parts. However, the practical side is also grounded in the theoretical one. This is where the Hegelian and Marxian heritage of Critical Theory remains active throughout, even if Hegel and Marx are no longer the most important references for a number of authors in the tradition, as has been the case for instance for Habermas from the late 1960s onwards.

Marx inherited from Hegel the rejection of decontextualised normative analysis, that is, any kind of criticism on the moral, legal, and political planes that is detached from a historical context. Critical theorists follow their lead in seeking to ground their reflections on possible forms of emancipation in the analysis of the present structures of domination, injustice, and social pathology. The potentialities for emancipation, and the very meaning of emancipation, are to be found, not *in abstracto*, through an asocial, ahistorical detachment from existing social reality. Rather, the notion of, and directive for, emancipation here necessarily involves the realist consideration of the historical context. Crucially, embedding the transformative and emancipatory project in the non-ideal sensitivity to dynamical historical contexts proceeds *negatively* via the overcoming of the structures of injustice and domination, and proceeds *positively* via the leveraging of progressive forces that can already be identified in existing social institutions and contemporary social spheres.

One last defining feature should be noted, namely the idea, also inherited from Hegel and Marx, that the success of the critical project relies on the theory's ability to develop a unified account of a historical period, such that the links between different sectors of society and their subjective counterparts can be shown. This attempt at describing the social system as a totality has several dimensions. It explains first why Critical Theorists rely on interdisciplinary collaboration with empirical social sciences for the realisation of their programme. This is because conceptual work alone is not able to exhaust the account of the historical period, given the latter's factual specificity. Indeed, the reliance on empirical research goes very deep because of the historicist, anti-apriorist assumptions already highlighted. Since the functional and the normative aspects of the analysis depend on the particular features of the historical period for their very content, they cannot be articulated *a priori*; they have to emerge from a description of social reality.

At the same time though, Critical Theory aims to be more than just a loose alliance of social theorists with overlapping normative insights. Particular social sciences, such as sociology, psychology, political economy, and legal studies, can provide the material necessary to understand the historical context. However, some meta-level theorising, some social theory loaded with normative insights is also necessary to show the links between the different orders of reality, how they are integrated in an

overall social system, and the forms of injustice and social pathology that arise from it. Typically for the first generation of Critical Theorists, that framework was provided by historical materialism.¹ For Habermas, it was rationalisation theory informed by the classics of sociology.² A large part of the debates in Critical Theory consist in arguments about the most relevant theoretical frameworks that can do justice to the complexity of the social system whilst integrating advances in social theory and the social sciences.³

This attempt at “totality” in explanation can sound hubristic, not least if it is referred back to Hegel’s encyclopaedic system, but for Critical Theorists it simply means taking seriously and doing justice to the double task defining the project. For, *if* one thinks that existing injustices and pathologies result from the social organisation as a whole, in all of its levels of complexity, *and if* one is committed to helping overcome these injustices and pathologies, *then* as a *Critical* Theorist, one has to try to show how the different levels of social organisation are related and how they affect subjective lives to produce those very injustices and pathologies.

One could show in detail how each generation, from Horkheimer and Adorno to Habermas, Nancy Fraser, Axel Honneth, Rainer Forst, and Rahel Jaeggi, has continued to maintain together these different features. For reasons of space, I will leave it at this *very* formal account. The point of retracing the different features of the project in such broad strokes is that *its political dimensions appear clearly from them*. In the next section, I will highlight these different political dimensions of the Critical Theory project that arise directly from the tasks it aims to fulfil and the key methodological premises to which it is committed.

II

Political Aspects of the Critical Theory Project

It goes without saying that Critical Theorists are interested in political issues. There is, however, a difficulty at the heart of Critical Theory’s own self-understanding in relation to political issues. Critical Theory has consistently portrayed itself as an alternative to Political Philosophy. From the start, its project was identified with the discipline of “Social Philosophy”,⁴ and Social Philosophy is often presented as an *alternative* to Political Philosophy.⁵ But in what *precise sense* is Critical Theory an alternative to Political Philosophy, if it studies similar issues, i.e. political ones? Is Social Philosophy just another way of doing Political Philosophy? If so, why reject Political Philosophy? To entangle those questions, we first need to see more precisely what *kind of* political questions Critical Theory is interested in solving, based on its intellectual project. We can use the critical description/interest in emancipation distinction as a

first entry point to highlight the different political aspects of the Critical Theory project.

First, the *critical* goal of Critical Theory has several inherently political dimensions. Critical Theory seeks to describe the social pathologies, injustices, and forms of oppression and domination prevalent in the current social situation in relation to both *causes* and *effects* and in relation to both the “objective” and “subjective” dimensions of what one might call “social irrationality”. That is, in its most comprehensive form, Critical Theory first aims to unveil the collective *and* the individual roots of social irrationality, typically, the *specific contradictions of a stage of capitalism*, and the psychological mechanisms whereby individuals not only are affected by these contradictions in their inner lives, but reproduce them and even amplify them. This *explanatory* task is directly complemented by what might be called the *aetiological* task of describing the specific injustices and pathologies produced by these collective and individual mechanisms. So, we have two levels of analysis, “objective” and “subjective”, and two perspectives: causes and effects. At each of those points, the political is directly implicated, each time in a different way.

Let us focus first on the explanatory task and begin with the analysis of the causes of social irrationality. The underlying contradictions of the social system, typically for most Critical Theorists, the contradictions inherent in a particular mode of capitalistic production, produce real effects only insofar as they are materialised in real social processes which involve different kinds of social agents: public organisations, private corporations, social institutions, and individuals themselves. All of these bodies exert social force by relying on objective sources of power and authority, notably the legal and regulatory frameworks that direct and constrain social action. This points to the fact that the organisations and agents that manifest in reality the contradictions of the social system rely upon an ordering of that system that is the outcome of legislation, regulation, and enforcement. Legislation is the product of decision-making processes, and these decisions are applied, enforced, and backed up by state power.

Famously, for the first generation of Critical Theory, the analysis of contemporary capitalism required that one study how capitalist processes relied upon the authoritarian state to ensure the continuation of economic functions when competition was hollowed out, and for the pacification of class conflict.⁶ Today, the transformations we are witnessing in *neoliberal* capitalism cannot be analysed fully without considering the actions of the states that help to create the legal frameworks, the financial environments, the political mechanisms, and indeed the ideological and cultural preconditions making possible and entrenching these transformations. Already at the level of the structural contradictions of the social system, the political is therefore inherently active. And as the writings of the 1940s cited previously show, *what is true of the*

structural contradictions of the system is also true at the level of the relations between groups and individuals. The structures of domination and injustice also owe their reality and force to institutional powers that are intrinsically political, to the extent that these structures are shaped by legislative and administrative processes anchored in state institutions and are put into practice and enforced through processes backed up by state power.

On the subjective side, the individual psychic structures that help to explain how the irrational rationality of present society can perpetuate itself are largely determined by social processes that are also entrenched politically, to the extent namely that the “mediating institutions in which individuals are socialised and trained are ultimately under the control and influence of the state”.⁷

If we move to the “effects” side of the critical analysis, further political dimensions emerge. Some of the pathologies of the “irrational” organisation of society are political. These pathologies again are collective and individual: pathologies of democracy and pathologies of citizenship. Critical theory, throughout its history, has aimed to include a critical study of the political aspects of modern pathologies, both from the point of view of the collectives and the individuals involved. This was obviously at the heart of the initial project in the 1930s. Habermas has written extensively on these aspects throughout his work, from the study of the legitimisation crisis of Fordist states (1973) to his more recent work on the undermining of the nation-state at the hand of deregulated, globalised capitalism (1998). Recently, Fraser and Jaeggi ended their rich dialogue in which they sought to reconnect the Critical Theory project to the critique of capitalism, precisely on those issues.⁸

Let us move now to the “emancipation” side of the critical project. Here, the political is obviously implicated since emancipation designates the task of collectively changing the social order for the benefit of the collective and of the individuals within it. Critical Theorists tackle this dimension from two main perspectives: a descriptive, diagnostic one, and a normative one. The analysis of the social system from a critical point of view provides resources to describe the potentialities for emancipation in the present context. As Horkheimer wrote in his famous 1937 programmatic description of the project: “the goal of critical thought, namely the rational state of society, is forced upon it by present distress. The theory which projects such a solution to the distress does not labour in the service of an existing reality but only gives voice to the mystery of that reality”.⁹ This idea that the new, just society can be anticipated in its outline as the reverse of present, unjust society was referred by first-generation Critical Theorists to Hegel and Marx: to Marx in terms of the real, material process of self-overcoming capitalism, but also to Hegel inasmuch as his dialectic provided for them the philosophical grammar to capture the flipping over of irrational reality into the rational reality entailed in it.¹⁰

In turn, this dimension of the Critical Theory project entails two different moments. The first is the general description of the social context from the point of view of the options available to the different actors (individuals, groups, classes, institutions, and the State itself), within the constraints and possibilities of the situation.¹¹ Within this kind of general overview, a more particular outlook focuses on the real political forces that might be in a position to embody and enforce the potentials for emancipation that the situation harbours.¹²

Finally, Critical Theory has always had an affinity with one political option among others, namely socialism. Indeed, Carl Grünberg, the first director of the Institute for Social Research, was a specialist of labour history and the founder of a journal and an archive “for the history of socialism and the labour movement”.¹³ In turn, the socialist option entails different aspects: a history of political actions and strategies that define the tradition within the history of real politics, a history of internal controversies through which the movement defined itself, which includes in particular a corpus of theoretical writings giving conceptual contours to the tradition, in opposition to other political traditions, notably liberalism, republicanism, and anarchism. In seeking to provide political direction to their contemporaries on the basis of their social diagnoses, Critical Theorists throughout the generations have engaged with the real socialist movements of their time, in relation both to strategic and conceptual issues of self-characterisation.¹⁴

As Table 9.1 summarises, through a simple survey of the different tasks involved in a Critical Theory project, we have found at a minimum 12 different moments in it that entail political aspects. It would be easy to show that all the great authors of the Critical Theory tradition have addressed, more or less extensively, these political aspects.

Table 9.1 Political Dimensions of the Critical Theory Project

<i>Critique</i>		<i>Emancipation</i>	
<i>Causes</i>	<i>Effects</i>	<i>Praxis</i>	<i>Theory</i>
Political institution of irrational social system	Pathologies of democratic processes	General political field	Socialism as option of modern politics
Political backing of social antagonisms	Pathologies of public discourse, ideology	Social movements	Socialism as tradition in political thought
Cultural and educational politics	Pathologies of citizenship	Processes of individual and collective enlightenment	Images of emancipated culture and free education

Thus far, I have highlighted those aspects of the Critical Theory project that entail a political dimension. Showing the many ways in which the Critical Theory project entails political aspects, however, raises the puzzle at the heart of this chapter: some of those political aspects that are of interest to Critical Theory would be typically issues that are *also* addressed in Political Philosophy, in some of its guises. And yet Critical Theory often presents itself in diametrical opposition to Political Philosophy, as a separate mode of inquiry, using different, *conflicting* methods and assumptions. Before we can envisage how the opposition might be softened, we must first establish on what grounds Critical Theory is suspicious of Political Philosophy.

III

Critical Theory's Critique of Political Philosophy

From its inception, Critical Theory has presented itself as an alternative to Political Philosophy. Horkheimer's work in the 1930s is particularly emblematic and influential in this respect.¹⁵ He engaged in lengthy, critical reconstructions of the early founders of "bourgeois Political Philosophy" (namely Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Vico) *precisely to define by contrast* the alternative Social Philosophy approach the institute would be taking. In each case, he aimed to show how the key categories and arguments developed by the classical Political Philosophers reflected each time a particular stage of economic development, basically a particular mode of capitalistic exploitation, which required in turn a specific organisation of political power, to ensure the pacification of class conflict in favour of the rising bourgeoisie. Horkheimer's judgement is ambivalent.

On the one hand, as brilliant reflections of their times in thought, he reads into the classical Political Philosophers genial anticipations of Hegel's philosophy of history and of historical materialism. But, precisely because of their Political Philosophy approaches, which, each time in different ways, disconnect conceptual and normative analysis from social conditions and the historical context, the great Political Philosophers also commit serious methodological mistakes, generalising unduly from the particular constellation in which they wrote. To give just one example, Machiavelli's famous justification of a good ruler's lack of morality can be read by the Social Philosopher both as an insightful analysis of real historical phenomenon, but also criticised for the way in which it is presented by the Political Philosopher:

when he demonstrates that the holiest expressions of loving kindness as well as the darkest of crimes have one and all been means in the hands of rulers throughout history, in so doing he has formulated a significant historical-philosophical doctrine. His mistake, which the

ensuing period committed even more egregiously in the doctrine of *raison d'état*, was that his justification of means of domination that were essential for the rise of the bourgeoisie in the Italy of his time was extended by him to cover the past and the future as well. Such eternalising of the temporally bound is a characteristic deficiency of modern philosophy of history.¹⁶

This criticism of Political Philosophy, objecting to the way in which it tackles issues in decontextualised fashion, both in terms of the social conditions upon which political phenomena are grounded, and in relation to the specific historical totality in which they are placed, has remained a constant trait of Critical Theory throughout the generations. Given that this criticism is at the heart of this chapter's argument, it is worthwhile expanding slightly on its different dimensions. Three problems can be distinguished.

The first problematic aspect of Political Philosophy for Critical Theorists is its apparent failure to adopt a truly historicist methodology, one that would reflexively connect the reflection on political issues to the historical context. Political Philosophy tends to define its concepts in a purely analytical manner, as if they existed *in abstracto* outside of time. But the norms that political actors refer to in their social struggles (such as freedom or equality), the core concepts that are used to study political institutions (such as sovereignty, legitimacy, authority, and citizenship), the structure of constitutional regimes and their political institutions (democracy, republic, parliament, and elections), all of these terms are affected in their meaning, scope, and normative content, depending on the historical period in which they are embedded. This criticism reprises Hegel's historicist approach to a normative theory of institutions, according to which the meaning of freedom is the core norm, and the core concepts of collective life are functions of the historical periods in which they are located. Marx, for all his criticism of Hegel's politics, took on this fundamental point and rejected any reference to trans-historical moral and political norms.¹⁷

Second, this critique of Political Philosophy's ahistorical approach is linked to the other fundamental feature of Critical Theory self-identifying as Social Philosophy, namely the attempt to ground specific inquiries in the overall social system. Explanation in Critical Theory, as we saw, consists in showing how a particular collective or individual problem arises from contradictions or crises or dysfunctions in the overall social system. This applies to political thinking as well. From such historical-materialist perspective, there is a suspicion that Political Philosophy, by claiming to analyse political concepts and political problems on their own, *independently of their roots in social processes and social problems*, is unaware of the role that these political concepts as a matter of fact play in the social tensions of the time, and indeed, of the role that

Political Philosophy itself plays in them.¹⁸ In short, it is oblivious to its own potentially *ideological character*.

This criticism aims particularly at liberalism as the mainstream branch of modern Political Philosophy. Liberalism was read by first-generation Critical Theorists as providing an idealised account of the political institutions that belong to an intrinsically unjust and pathological social system. A direct connection was established between liberalism as real political system and as political theory.¹⁹ A similar suspicion continues to be at play in recent vindications of a Social Philosophy approach, questioning the self-understanding of liberalism as being simply the reflexive discourse of modernity in its normative foundations.²⁰

Third, at the intersection of the theoretical and the practical, Critical Theorists object to the way in which Political Philosophers construe the relationship between *political theorising* and *political reality*. Critical Theory, as we saw, seeks to describe the political options available to individuals and the collective, and it seeks to do so on the basis of the analysis of the contradictions and dysfunctions of the system in its current organisation. From this point of view, the way in which Political Philosophers tend to bridge the gap between the analysis of political norms, processes, and institutions and real social situations is the wrong way around, as their theories of justice seem to merely demand that the real be made equal to the normative, without consideration of the forces preventing this to happen, or indeed those forces that could make it possible. This suspicion is as old as Critical Theory and is grounded in Hegel's critique of Kant's "merely moral point of view".²¹ This is typically what contemporary Critical Theorists continue to object to about the mainstream Political Philosophy that developed after Rawls.²²

By presenting itself as an alternative to Political Philosophy on the basis of these criticisms, we may assume that Critical Theory thinks of itself as a mode of inquiry that interrogates the different political issues that were listed previously in more consistent ways. Not all the topics touched on by Political Philosophy would be objects of Critical Theory, simply because their goals as intellectual inquiries are different. But Critical Theorists seem to assume that those political objects that are of interest to Critical Theory are addressed by it more appropriately than by Political Philosophy. As we will now see, however, there are a number of areas of inquiry where Critical Theory remains relatively underdetermined.

IV

The Relative Indeterminacy of the Political in Critical Theory

As we saw in Section 2, the project of Critical Theory has many inherently political dimensions attached to it. However, a number of those aspects have not been explored in a significant amount of detail. For

some of them, the political indeterminacy is mostly true across the generations; for others, there are important exceptions, which one might read as confirming a general enough rule, once the entire corpus is considered.

1. *Democratic Agnosticism*

One trait that needs to be mentioned from the outset is what we might call Critical Theory's "democratic agnosticism". This consists in theorists refraining from engaging in substantive analysis of political matters, whether they are located at the normative or empirical levels, instead leaving to real democratic processes the task of specifying the content of the political norms or institutional realities involved. A large part of the political philosophy of Critical Theory consists in elaborating sophisticated accounts of democracy, to then refer to the possible or anticipated outcomes of the processes of decision-making they would make possible to settle important political issues. Honneth's ending of *The Struggle for Recognition* is typical in this respect:

whether these substantive values [deriving from demands of recognition] point in the direction of a political republicanism, an ecologically based asceticism, or a collective existentialism, whether they presuppose changes in socio-economic circumstances or are compatible with the conditions of a capitalist society – this is no longer a matter for theory but rather for the future of social struggles.²³

This democratic agnosticism is not just a way to avoid taking a stand on first-order political issues. It often operates at the core of the theoretical models themselves. For instance, the fundamental norm in Fraser's work has remained throughout her writings, *the meta-norm of participatory parity*. This is a "meta-"norm, to the extent that it is specifically designed to avoid giving content to any substantial principle that would ground political claims (for instance some idea of self-determination, or full capability), in the name of which justice could be demanded. Justice, for Fraser, consists solely in the ability to participate fully in social life. Injustice designates the obstacles to such participation.²⁴

In this gesture of pushing the inquiry away from the substance of justice claims to the question of participation in processes in which these kinds of claims are addressed, Fraser, of course, repeats Habermas's own proceduralist approach to political issues. As is well-known, Habermas' decisive intervention in Political Philosophy has consisted in rearticulating substantive questions, for instance the definitions of sovereignty and legitimacy, the specific structures and functions of the different arms of the constitutional government, and indeed the ultimate principles upon which a political order is justified, through the second-order grammar of the Discourse Principle.

The distancing effect of such a method appears strikingly when Habermas contrasts the discourse theory approach to political issues from the substantive traditions of the historical political “-isms”: liberalism and republicanism.²⁵ Discourse theory is a method, whereas the “-isms” are defined by a whole set of substantive norms, notably core definitions of freedom and equality, a particular way of understanding the relation between these norms, theories of sovereignty and of the legitimate government, and so on. Forst’s brand of Critical Theory follows this Habermasian model closely, since he is concerned mainly with the question of specifying the second-order normative principle that grounds demands of justice, as well as the critique of alternative models of justice (mostly liberal and communitarian), rather than the description at the first level, in substantive terms, of what injustice and social pathologies consist (2007).²⁶

Even though she uses a different approach, Jaeggi’s model of Critical Theory (2018) also performs a kind of proceduralist distancing. Despite her criticisms of Habermas, her pragmatist approach to politics also favours what we might call a meta-answer to substantive issues, leaving to the respective lifeforms the task of deciding by themselves, through the mobilising of their own ethical resources, the shape they want to give to major social, economic, and political issues.²⁷

This democratic agnosticism of later generations of Frankfurt School theorists reprises the caution of the first generation, who were themselves directly influenced by Marx’s famous avoidance of substantive claims about the organisation of the future, emancipated society. The case has been well made that Adorno was far from uninterested in political theoretical questions.²⁸ We noted earlier how much Horkheimer had interacted with classical Political Philosophy, and commentators have shown the importance of these early studies in his development. But their respective approaches to political issues were also “twice removed”, to use a Platonic reference, from contentful specifications. In their case, this did not occur via proceduralist distancing, but rather, following the model of Marx, they focused solely on the critique of existing politics, and the link between the current stage of capitalism and the perverse forms of politics accompanying it. As with Marx, reference to future emancipation mentioned a few basic features in some scattered passages but never went beyond that.

2. Hegel and Rousseau

If we assess this democratic agnosticism in light of the defining features of the Critical Theory project, it reveals a few surprising traits. One of them relates to the fact that, for all the variations across the different authors who have taken up the project, the Hegelian reference has remained a defining one throughout. Some contemporary Critical Theorists like

Honneth and Jaeggi are much more influenced by Hegel than others, notably students of Habermas like Forst. And yet Hegel remains a key underlying reference to the extent of the historicist, contextualist approach to normative issues, which is a characteristic of Critical Theory for all authors. The odd point about this underlying Hegelianism of Critical Theory, however, is that he of course did not hesitate to provide rich, detailed accounts of some of the political issues, notably the shape of the institutions of freedom, that Critical Theorists refrain from answering, by retreating behind democratic agnosticism.

The political writings of Habermas and Honneth seem to be exceptions to this. In *Between Facts and Norms*, for example, Habermas provided genealogical and normative accounts of the different institutions of the modern constitutional state, showing both the reasons for their emergence and their optimal modes of operation for the realisation of democracy. In his writings on “the post-national constellation” and on European integration, Habermas equally took up the “Hegelian challenge”, by proposing descriptions of what would be from his perspective the “rational” political core of the time, that is, *institutional potentialities entailed in the present that would be the optimal democratic options for dealing with the crisis of the nation-state*. Similarly, in the final sections of *Freedom’s Right*, Honneth focuses on the institutional and cultural conditions underpinning the functioning of the modern constitutional state. The book ends, in Habermasian fashion, with a diagnosis of the current crisis of the democratic state, and the political resources that might be drawn upon to address it.

However, even these eminent examples do not go as far as Hegel in their analyses of the political institutions making “concrete freedom” possible in modernity. *Between Facts and Norms* does not go into nearly as much detail as Hegel in describing the structure of government institutions, how they relate to social institutions, and the role each plays in the overall realisation of “concrete freedom”. Habermas’s aims in his book only commit him to showing how the arms of government (in particular, the legislature and the judiciary) fulfil different dimensions in the institutional process transforming communicative power into administrative power.

Honneth’s latest *magnum opus* is formally organised along the architecture of the *Philosophy of Right*, and Honneth is explicit about the Hegelian inspiration of his new model of freedom as “social freedom”.²⁹ But he does not attempt to “actualise” the most significant section of Hegel’s book, maintaining a wariness even in his later writings towards the latter’s “strong institutionalism”.³⁰ Honneth does not delve into concrete aspects of institutional design, but rather uses the Hegelian institutional carve-up to analyse different spheres of institutionalisation of freedom. In relation to the constitutional state, only the organs enabling the formation and expression of collective decision-making are of interest to him, as this is the central role that Honneth attaches to the state.

But Hegel's interests in describing the modern state were more diverse: in particular, a major feature of his analysis was the relation between social and political spheres, notably between economic processes and collective management. Hegel also spent a considerable amount of attention on the links between political representation and the social identity of represented and representatives. Honneth's reconstruction does mention the problem of the narrowness of political representation in modern states, as the privileged classes have for long periods monopolised the decision-making processes to further their own interests. However, he does not offer a precise account of how that might be averted in the actual functioning of the state and the relation of representation to pre-political institutions.

Indeed, what is striking in the case of both Habermas and Honneth, in contrast with Hegel, is the extent to which they remain oriented to the past in their analysis of political institutions. The possible shape of new institutional arrangements that would allow communities to meet new challenges, for instance, in Habermas's case, the integration of European nation-states into a broader European framework and political culture, is read off from genealogical reconstructions that make sense of the present in light of the recent past. The value of these new institutional constellations is gauged by the extent to which they might or might not fulfil normative requirements that were precisely those that inspired the historical developments just reconstructed. In other words, little room is made for institutional innovation. One might object that Hegel himself claimed only a retrospective role for philosophy, the reconstruction *ex ante* of "its own time comprehended in thought".³¹ However, Hegel clearly had a different understanding of what a reconstruction of the rationality of the present means, since the rich detail of his institutional outline was nowhere to be found in the societies of his time.

If we think about some of the most significant issues of contemporary politics, the relative failure of contemporary Critical Theory to take up the Hegelian challenge is striking. We can mention for instance the modes of democratic participation, the relationship between state power and autonomous economic processes, and the global environmental crisis. In the first case, the old style of representative politics, based on formal parliamentary elections, party organisations, and informal mediations in the public sphere is taken as the only possible model. Habermas and Honneth analyse well the crisis of this model but show comparatively little interest in alternative modes of democratic decision-making. Aside from the pathologies of democratic participation, are there no other potentialities inscribed in the present? Has the model of representative, party politics not clearly demonstrated its conceptual exhaustion? In the case of the tension between national state sovereignty and global capitalistic forces, again, the critical diagnoses are detailed and profound, but little

is offered by way of countering the corrosive power of capitalistic mechanisms upon political institutions.

Both Habermas and Honneth limit their recommendations to extending the normative force built into modern institutions of the recent past, but they are the first to admit that *this will not be anywhere near sufficient to address the magnitude of the problems encountered*. What would a social and political “reembedding” of globalised capital require? Relatedly, in relation to the environmental crisis, their Eurocentric perspectives, particularly Honneth’s, contains no indication of what a global institutional response would need to look like. And it must be emphasised that Habermas and Honneth are taken to task here only because they are the Critical Theorists who offer the most detailed analyses of state institutions.

We can make remarks of a similar kind by turning to another one of Critical Theory’s key influences, namely Rousseau. He is acknowledged as the first thinker to have developed a mode of inquiry into social and cultural phenomena that contrasted with classical political and moral arguments, thereby demonstrating for the time a clear and well-defined Social Philosophy perspective.³² Yet Rousseau should be a problematic reference for Critical Theorists. His approach in *The Social Contract* could be taken as the epitome of a “freestanding” normative analysis of just institutions. For that matter, Hegel criticised it every time he referenced Rousseau,³³ arguing that the very principle to be deduced through it (individual freedom made possible by participation in collective self-determination) was already implicitly presupposed in the thought experiment. Such criticism of social contract theory is one of the most obvious foils for the type of grounded analysis Critical Theory aims to perform.³⁴ For Rousseau himself, however, *The Social Contract* was unproblematically related, through deep thematic and conceptual links, to the *Discourses*.³⁵ How can Critical Theory do justice to these links given its strong methodological assumptions that seem to favour one aspect of Rousseau’s work and reject the other?

3. *Political Indeterminacy in Relation to Critique*

A relative political indeterminacy can also be identified in many Critical Theory writings in relation to the critical wing of the project. These indeterminacies appear in relation to at least two aspects of the critical programme: the analysis of *injustice* and the diagnosis of *social crisis*.

Many Critical Theorists are resistant to the analysis of injustice at the normative and even at the empirical level. Jaeggi’s *Critique of Forms of Life*, which articulates a sophisticated account of how critique ought to be engaged in, contains no reference to injustice. Nor does Habermas’s voluminous treatise of Political Philosophy. A recent compendium of Critical Theory featuring its most illustrious current proponents barely

mentions it.³⁶ This suspicion towards the notion of injustice might be grounded in the belief that the need for critique to remain “immanent” to the social world it describes implies refraining from engaging in substantive theories of justice. Reference to *feelings of injustice* might be countenanced as a first, phenomenological approach to particular problems,³⁷ but this does not translate into independent analyses of the very notions of justice and injustice. The main source of this is famously to be found in Hegel’s *Sittlichkeit* as a critique of Kant’s moral theory,³⁸ and in a prevalent interpretation of Marx which argues that he rejected a critique of capitalism in the name of justice.³⁹

From post-war writings in Critical Theory, it seems that only second-order injustices are appropriate objects of study for critical philosophers, typically for Habermas, the obstacles preventing some individuals or groups from participating in discussions on first-order issues. Fraser’s norm of participatory parity is particularly interesting in this respect. At first glance, her writings seem to focus on many forms of injustice: gender and racial discrimination as well as systemic economic inequality. But the norm of participatory parity in fact also performs a distancing effect. From its perspective, it is not these injustices *per se* that are problematic, but their consequences, namely their preventing subjects from *fully participating in social life*. Even though among contemporary Critical Theorists, she emphasises most consistently the different facets of injustice, even for her, injustice is *not an intrinsic, but only a mediated concern*.

For those theorists explicitly endorsing a Social Philosophy approach, such as Jaeggi, the analysis of injustice is largely replaced by the analysis of social pathologies. The most famous displacing of injustice through social theorisation and second-level focus is in the final part of Habermas’s *Theory of Communicative Action*, in which the critical diagnosis of contemporary society lists the pathologies and dysfunctions arising from the colonisation of different spheres of the lifeworld by system logics, and ends with a survey of social movements resisting these trends. Some of those movements, like the feminist movement, or the movements for the recognition of equal rights for minorities, would easily deserve an analysis in terms of injustice, *but this is not how they are described*, as a result of the social-theory angle. Instead, their main impetus for the Social Philosopher is “resistance to the colonisation of lifeworlds”.⁴⁰

There is one major exception to this abstinence of post-war Critical Theory from substantive analysis of injustice, namely Honneth’s theory of recognition. His first model, presented in *The Struggle for Recognition*, aimed to make of injustice, conceptualised through the range of denials or misshaped forms of recognition, a central concern of the Critical Theory programme. The “grammar of recognition” could provide a “formal” model of justice that would be substantive enough to identify different breaches of it at the first-order level, but formal enough that it would abide by the methodological *desiderata* of historicism and

contextualism. Because it was grounded in a theory of modernity and a thick model of subjectivity, it was also meant to avoid the “impotence of the ought”, to use Habermas’s expression.⁴¹ In principle, the analysis of the norms of recognition at play in real struggles against injustice could claim to have both feet in social reality. It is not by chance that the most serious recent attempt to develop a critical theory based on the experience of injustice, namely Renault (2017, 2019) was heavily influenced by Honneth’s model.

The criticisms of Honneth’s first model have come from all quarters in the academic field, but the ones coming from Critical Theory have typically rehearsed the reasons why other Critical Theorists avoid defining a substantive concept of justice or indeed refrain from talking about injustice at a first-order level. For instance, an important part of the criticism raised by Fraser (2003) concerned precisely the thick, “realist” aspects of Honneth’s model, linking normative demands to substantive theses of social psychology that helped to articulate concrete, first-level meanings of injustice in connection with real experiences of social suffering. Faced with a barrage of criticism from within his own camp, it is no surprise that in his second model, Honneth abandoned his initial approach of directly connecting social theory and normative analysis to the experience of injustice.

These reservations of contemporary Critical Theorists towards the analysis of injustice has a direct political cost: conceptually, it leads to a lack of acuity in distinguishing precisely between different kinds of injustice; this lack of precision in turn makes itself felt when analysing real situations of injustice and real movements against injustice.⁴² This lack of precision leaves a negative impression when connected to democratic agnosticism, as though the intrinsically political character of Critical Theory had been left behind, and “the presentation of societal contradictions [was now] “merely an expression of the concrete social situation[, and not also] a force within it to stimulate change”.⁴³

We might note also that the reluctance of contemporary Critical Theory to thematise injustice is surprising in view of its own tradition. Horkheimer explicitly defined the “business” of Critical Theory as “hastening developments which will lead to a society without injustice”.⁴⁴ Adorno did not have any issue either with calling modern society, the criticism and overcoming of which Critical Theory is dedicated to, as the “unjust state” (*ungerechter Zustand*).

In relation to the analysis of the *crises* of modern social systems, there are only brief moments in the history of Critical Theory when the political moment has been a central focus of study. By this, I mean taking into account the specific role played by political institutions and political mechanisms, notably those of the state, in the emergence of crises of the overall social system. Today, many critical thinkers outside of the Frankfurt School tradition highlight the decisive role played by the reform of

the state in the establishment of neoliberalism and the central role of the neoliberal state in the current and looming crises, notably the rise in inequality and the environmental crisis.⁴⁵ There were some famous exceptions to this lack of interest in the state as a central factor of social crisis.

The first was in the late 1930s and 1940s when the concept of state capitalism became a central explanatory element for Horkheimer and Adorno, and the concept of authoritarian state became the central factor in the explanation of contemporary structures of domination.⁴⁶ The second moment was in the 1970s, when Habermas centred his analyses of the crises of post-war developed economies around the concept of “state-organised” capitalism. Since then, however, Critical Theory has largely abandoned reference to the state in its diagnostic descriptions of the crisis tendencies of the most recent stages of capitalism.

Honneth dedicates a whole section of *Freedom's Right* to “misdevelopments” of the democratic state, but his perspective there focuses on forces that prevented the modern states from fulfilling their democratic function, not the causal role of state institutions in injustices and social pathologies.⁴⁷ One might cite also as a recent counter-example the impressive analysis deployed by Fraser in her conversation with Jaeggi (2018). But, as these two eminent Critical Theorists explain, they contended the need to dedicate a whole book to capitalism, and notably the political dimensions of capitalistic modes of domination and exploitation, and the crises attendant to it, *precisely because it had largely disappeared from academic Critical Theory*. Even in their rich discussion, the state features only as a background figure to which no precise features are given. In Fraser's analysis, it operates mostly in negative fashion, as a self-limiting power that institutionally and ideologically absented itself from the realm of social activity that was identified with the economy.⁴⁸ If we compare these two important books of recent Critical Theory with, for example, the account of the modern state that Bourdieu provided in his 2012 lectures at the Collège de France, the contrast in the level of detail is stark.

4. Political Indeterminacy in Relation to Emancipation

Critical Theory also suffers from a relative level of political indeterminacy in relation to its discussion of emancipation.

We already noted two traits of Critical Theory in this respect, which seem to be definitional for the tradition: the first is a commitment to socialism over against other modern political traditions; the second is the acceptance of Marx's prohibition on anticipating concrete features of the future emancipated society. This absence in relation to the conception of socialism is another version of democratic agnosticism. Emancipated individuals, Critical Theory seems to imply, would demonstrate the extent of their newfound freedom precisely by deciding among

themselves how they would organise social cooperation. Yet again, Honneth seems to present counter-evidence with his 2016 book on socialism. In it, he offers precisely a conceptual definition of the tradition's core ideal, namely the idea of *social freedom*, as well as a series of suggestions as to what an implementation of socialism would entail, which would require notably establishing an open archive of socialist thinking and practice, in particular in relation to non-capitalistic economic organisation.⁴⁹ Like the 2018 book of Fraser and Jaeggi on capitalism, however, this can just as well be taken as an exception that confirms the rule. Honneth's book is precisely a response to what is a glaring absence in the recent Critical Theory tradition. Indeed, it is Honneth himself that provided the most stunning evidence of democratic agnosticism with the final words of *The Struggle for Recognition*. Even if his *The Idea of Socialism* is an impressive response to the question of what Critical Theory's favoured political option might entail, when placed within the entire corpus of that tradition, it highlights just as much the absence of discussions of this kind.

V

Critical Theory and/as Political Philosophy

In this last section, we can make a few, tentative suggestions for how Critical Theory might develop more substantive accounts of the political, by drawing on its own history, methods, and conceptual resources, and also by drawing on authors from other traditions, including Political Philosophers.

1. *Hegel*

First, contemporary Critical Theory might seek to respond more squarely to the challenge posed by Hegel's social and political theory.⁵⁰ Very few of the institutional structures, mechanisms, and processes Hegel described in the last part of his *Philosophy of Right* existed in that shape at the time. However, crucially, Hegel clearly thought there was no contradiction between his rejection of the "merely moral point of view" and its corresponding deontic prescriptions, and his analysis of the kinds of institutions required for the realisation of "concrete freedom". That there was no tension or contradiction for him came from the fact that he thought a philosophical approach was in a position to extract the underlying "rational" structure of the society of the time, even though the latter might not appear in its full developed shape anywhere as such. Obviously, it would be preposterous to attempt to mimic Hegel's method of deriving the different institutions from different syllogisms, and thus to try to base some substantive description of modern institutions on a

comprehensive logical system that would articulate the different dimensions of rationality.

But this does not mean that the Hegelian challenge should not be acknowledged in its full scope and at least partially taken up, if the project of a Critical Theory is to be realised on the political level. This would involve more than just a critical study of the extent to which political mechanisms and institutions are involved in contemporary forms of injustice, social pathology, and systemic crisis. And it would involve more than just a study of the “misdevelopments”⁵¹ of the democratic constitutional state. It would also involve an appraisal of the possible ways in which political processes and institutions might provide social reality to collective demands for justice and collective attempts at addressing looming crises.

In particular, one area where contemporary Critical Theory might take its lead from Hegel is the way in which he linked the political to social institutions. One powerful, original lesson from the *Philosophy of Right* is that social theory and political theory should be intimately connected. The relevant level here is that of the thick description of social and political mechanisms and their interconnections, the kind of descriptions that borrowed the functionalist language of systems theory in Habermas, a turn from which that kind of Critical Theory is still struggling to distance itself. Hegel’s detailed descriptions of the functions and structures of state institutions in the third part of the *Philosophy of Right* are rooted in the description of the social spheres in the previous parts. More specifically, state institutions, he argues, are directly rooted in the institutions of work, and the political sphere cannot be articulated in its logic in separation from the organisation of society as a division of labour. This is not just true for the different functions the state serves so that other social functions can themselves unfold, typically economic ones. This is even true in terms of collective decision-making. In other words, one lesson to be drawn from Hegel is the political centrality of work, which means that political processes and political institutions are centrally affected by the institutions and processes of work and therefore, conversely, that care for progressive politics should be centrally concerned with the organisation of work. This Hegelian lesson requires that the great rupture with the socialist tradition performed by Habermas, which Honneth vindicates in his 2016 book on socialism, of severing the links between political emancipation and the emancipation of work, should be critically re-examined.

Such critical re-examination of the place of work in Critical Theory’s social theory, as a key plank of its political theory, would be wholly consistent with its defining features as an original intellectual project. For most Critical Theorists, there are deep conceptual threads running through and connecting different perspectives of the “social”: between the definition of freedom as “social freedom”, the historicist and contextualist method of grounding normative claims in social theory, and

the favouring of socialism as a viable political option. It is for that reason that Critical Theory and Social Philosophy overlap so significantly. However, there are many ways, some highly conservative, of emphasising the importance of the social for individual and collective life. For most Critical Theorists, the emphasis on “the social”, more specifically, entails two elements, which are tightly interconnected: (i) the element of individual freedom and (ii) the element of reciprocity. This is captured in the normative vision of the social as ideally a free cooperation among free social agents.

There are many ways human beings cooperate, through forms of care, through the sharing of cultural activities, and through collective decision making, and they obviously all matter. For Hegel, however, there is one type of cooperation that is functionally foundational, both for the structures of social life and the development of the individuals, and that is cooperation through productive activities. It would make sense for contemporary Critical Theory to focus more intently on the experiences and institutions of work as ground conditions of contemporary politics, both for critical, diagnostic purposes, say for the analysis of populism, as well as for programmatic purposes, to establish how democracy might be saved and meet the immense challenges looming on the horizons.

2. *Injustice, Inequality*

For the reasons stated earlier, many Critical Theorists are wary of the language of injustice. There is a temptation in Critical Theory to either replace the language of injustice with the language of social pathologies, or to deem injustice as the critical focus only at the *second-order* level, as an obstacle to democratic or even social participation. The reason for this reticence is the Hegel/Marx-inspired diffidence towards Kantian constructivist definitions of justice, of the kind typically displayed in *mainstream* Anglo-American Political Philosophy. However, not only is such reservation towards injustice unwarranted in view of the project’s founders, it can in fact lead to serious blind spots in the delivery of the project.

If Critical Theory is to take injustices seriously as a first-order problem, it will need to engage in some conceptual analysis of justice at some point in the exercise. For all their suspicion of ahistorical conceptual analysis, Critical Theorists are forced to define in basic formal terms the key operating concepts that they mobilise in normative or descriptive analyses. A good example of this methodological difficulty can be witnessed in a recent article by Jaeggi on pathologies of work (2017). In her writings, Jaeggi is particularly circumspect when it comes to abiding by the tradition’s defining methodological strictures. However, to be in a position to describe to what extent current pathologies of work are indeed pathologies of *work*, she found there was no way around providing some formal

definition of it.⁵² Critical Theorists should not be worried to engage in this kind of analysis of core normative notions.

This simply repeats a gesture that Hegel and Marx themselves had no compunction in doing, despite their historicist approaches. For example, Marx, who famously rejected reference to ahistorical normative concepts, had no issue with defining his fundamental concept of labour in formal terms in the *Grundrisse*⁵³ and in *Capital*.⁵⁴ As Critical Theory is forced to define its central normative concepts, and in particular justice, since phenomena of injustice should be one of its central concerns, it is bound to come across reflections that have been engaged in about the very same topics in Political Philosophy.

The crux that this represents for Critical Theory appears particularly vividly around the issue of material or, as the early socialists used to call it, *real equality*. Contemporary Critical Theorists sometimes express their views on justice in terms of “social equality”, that is, equal access to the conditions of participation or self-determination.⁵⁵ However, economic equality tends to be *underplayed* in their writings. Even when it is taken seriously, notably by Fraser when she focuses on injustices of maldistribution, it is discussed as an obstacle to full participation in social life. One could argue that this means that even in this case, inequality is not taken as an injustice *per se*, but from a second-order perspective, A similar displacement is operated by Honneth, since he argues that equality matters only as a dimension of autonomy.⁵⁶ This implies that inequality is *not an injustice in and of itself*, but only to the extent that it damages some aspects of the more fundamental ideal of autonomy. The first generation of Critical Theorists already had an ambivalent relationship to claims of equality. It was under the direct influence of Marx’s famous rejections of equality as ideological illusion in *Capital*⁵⁷ and as a misguided concept in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

Adorno gave these ideas an extreme formulation in a derogatory passage of *Minima Moralia*,⁵⁸ in which he sees the extreme levelling happening in the death camps as the ultimate vindication of the “abstract” demand for equality. In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, the demand for material equality was listed as an issue belonging to “old politics”, which implied that it had become obsolete and was superseded by other issues pursued by new social struggles, tracking actual dysfunctions of the social system. In contemporary Critical Theory, the concern for distributive equality suffers from the fact that it has been a central concern of mainstream Political Philosophy in the last three decades.

But there have been many activists, classical thinkers, and contemporary philosophers, including many who aimed to realise socialism, who have defended the importance of economic equality. It would be a mistake to abandon the concern for equality, including equality of distribution, just because that concern is central in a method that Critical Theory wants to avoid. Given the rise in inequality in recent decades, there has

to be a way for Critical Theory to continue to talk about distributive inequality, *without thereby thinking this would mean renouncing the critique of free-standing normative analysis*.

The work of Forst is emblematic in this regard. Of all the leading Critical Theorists, he is the one who engages most substantially with mainstream Political Philosophy, whilst maintaining key methodological features of the tradition, such as the focus on social relations and the historical nature of justice claims.⁵⁹ Even Forst, however, despite his closeness to mainstream Political Philosophy, rejects the focus on distribution. Like other Critical Theorists, he does not deny the importance of distributive injustices. However, in a typical gesture, he pushes it back from being a topic deserving analysis at a first-order level, which would then require conceptual analysis of further clarification, and instead makes it only one type in the list of objects concerned by second-order demands for justification.

There is a way in which Critical Theory could interact meaningfully with Anglo-American Political Philosophy, in a manner resembling the one that Forst has pursued, but without pushing issues of justice to being merely a problem that is to be addressed at the second-order level. This approach connects the concern with justice and equality with the points raised in the previous section in relation to Rousseau and the definition of socialism.

In the last two decades, a powerful new paradigm has emerged in mainstream Political Philosophy, challenging established liberal and utilitarian approaches, namely the republican paradigm. Forst (2015) has recently started a dialogue with it. This paradigm, as it is presented in contemporary scholarship, is divided between a “neo-Roman” wing, with Quentin Skinner and Philip Pettit as its main figures, and a “radical” US one, represented in particular by Elizabeth Anderson. An engagement with Anderson’s pragmatist version of republicanism would benefit Critical Theory for a number of reasons.

Anderson’s version of republicanism overlaps with contemporary models of Critical Theory in significant ways. Her relational definition of equality is specifically designed as a critique of the distributivist approach.⁶⁰ She emphasises the quality of social relations and social cooperation as the foundational ideal of the just society. Strikingly, she uses the same formulation by Stephen Darwall, as did Honneth,⁶¹ to encapsulate this idea of justice, “to stand up as an equal before others”.⁶² Her vision of democratic equality is similar to Forst’s definition of justice as reciprocal and general right of justification: “democratic equality regards two people as equal when each accepts the obligation to justify their actions by principles acceptable to the other, and in which they take mutual consultation, reciprocation and recognition for granted”.⁶³ Her analyses are also anchored in social theory, notably when she engages in critical studies of work organisations (2015a) or market outcomes

(2008). Like Honneth in his first model, she places much emphasis on social movements and on processes of public “contestation” for moral progress.⁶⁴

Her reference for this is not Hegel and Marx, but *classical American pragmatism*. But many *contemporary* Critical Theorists also draw heavily on this tradition of thought. Like Honneth in his recent book on socialism, she grounds her account of relational, “republican” equality in the history of political ideas and the history of political movements. The republican tag is not just a theoretical “-ism” made up to distinguish her position from others in the contemporary academic field. With it, she wants to retrieve a long tradition of thinking politically about justice, what she calls the “radical” tradition, with Rousseau as one of its main founders. This alliance of conceptual analysis and historical reconstruction is the same gesture as the one performed by the “neo-Romans”: a political theory can justify itself not just through the force of conceptual argument, but also if it can show that it has been a political demand throughout history, in different kinds of social contexts, both in terms of its defining principles and as an inspiration for real political practice, including in relation to particular institutions, notably in relation to democratic processes.

Based on all these thematic and methodological overlaps but also as she consistently and pointedly pits her republicanism against the socialist tradition, an engagement with Anderson’s brand of republicanism would be particularly fruitful for contemporary Critical Theory. It would represent a valuable challenge to take up.

Anderson contrasts her republican approach to a socialist one on a number of issues. One particularly important issue is economic equality. In her debates with socialists, her main target is G. A. Cohen, who along other luck egalitarians has explored in intricate details, both in terms of normative principles and principles of application, how to implement a view of justice according to which it would ensure a fair, equal distribution of “desirable conditions of life”.⁶⁵ As a result of all the overlaps noted previously, notably the emphasis on equality in social relations as the true measure of justice, Critical Theorists appear to be much closer to Anderson than to Cohen.

However, she presents her approach *pointedly and self-consciously* as a republican one, and by that she means specifically, *not* a socialist one. It could be that the term “socialism” means something different in the American and the German and European academic fields, but that is unlikely. Anderson is unrepentant in her criticism and rejection of Marxist arguments, whereas most Critical Theorists today, for all the criticisms and attempted corrections of Marx’s ideas, continue to claim him as a founding figure. The challenge thrown to Critical Theorists by Anderson is thus to be more precise on what they mean by “socialism”. For as it stands, *it could just as well be a version of radical republicanism*.

To clarify the difference between Anderson's brand of republicanism and their vision of socialism, Critical Theorists need to engage in the same kind of work she has done in tying conceptual work and historical reconstruction, reciprocally linking the definition of fundamental norms and of the ultimate social ideal, to real historical thinkers and historical movements. Honneth did this in *The Idea of Socialism*, but further work would be required to clarify precisely how the arguments presented in it demarcate his conception of socialism from a radical republican one. At stake is the legacy of the French Revolution, what distinguishes a republican from a socialist take on liberty, equality, solidarity, and their interconnections.

A particularly important theme to explore in order to establish this difference is economic equality. Anderson embraces Rawls's difference principle as being fully compatible with republican, democratic equality since the principle aims precisely to provide the justification for some economic disparity. Cohen argues against the difference principle because its purpose contradicts the assumption of equality it is premised upon, and it leads to outcomes, economic inequality, which, on his understanding of justice, are a negation of it.⁶⁶ Can Critical Theorists remain agnostic in relation to these discussions, on the basis of their incompatible modes of approaching political issues? Or should they take a stand?

Everyone agrees that some level of economic provision is necessary for every individual to be able to participate fully in social life. The issue at stake is whether some economic inequalities are justifiable, or justice demands some levelling so that everyone enjoys the same life chances. Is that really a question Critical Theory should not be interested in answering? Does it not matter to the evaluation of current social reality and of possible political options? Since he endorses the *Leistungsprinzip* as one of the major normative principles arising with modern society, Honneth would seem to side with Anderson against Cohen. Is it not a problem if, on the issue of economic inequality, Honneth's model calls itself socialist in Germany but would be republican in America?

The issue is complicated by the fact that, in relation to the second fundamental principle cited by Cohen to define socialism, the principle of community,⁶⁷ Honneth is for that matter much closer to him than Anderson. Anderson emphasises reciprocity, but only in relation to the justification of claims, in the same manner as Forst: the claims I make on others, I should reciprocally expect others to be able to make on me, and I should be prepared to provide good reasons if in some respect I claim that the other should receive less than me. In the socialist understanding, notably as Honneth has sought to conceptually clarify it, reciprocity goes a lot deeper, *it involves considering the well-being of others in my own plans*. This is very close to Cohen's own argument. Is it just a difference of opinion that is to be expected if a leading Political Philosopher and a

leading Critical Theorist agree on one major principle of socialism (reciprocity) and disagree on the other (equality)?

In citing Anderson and Cohen, my aim is not to underplay the major methodological differences between mainstream Anglo-American Political Philosophy and Critical Theory, and to argue for some kind of irenic synthesis. Rather, it is that thorny issues for Critical Theory's own self-understanding arise when, rather than rejecting mainstream Political Philosophy out of hand, it is taken seriously, notably on issues on which there is disagreement where agreement might be expected, and agreement where disagreement might be.

3. Contemporary Crises of Capitalism

Many Critical Theorists have reserved a place in their models for some of the institutional dimensions of the pathologies, injustices, and dysfunction of current social systems: the systemic forces colonising lifeworlds in Habermas; economic and technological trends and the ideological basis of modern states leading to misdevelopments in the spheres of social freedom for Honneth; forces of power and domination for Forst; and the dynamics of exploitation and expropriation at play in capitalism for Jaeggi and Fraser. And yet, as the previous section has signalled, however rich and enlightening each of these accounts might be, they remain relatively underdetermined when it comes to describing the precise institutional mechanisms behind crises and social pathologies. This is true even of Habermas, as his system-theoretical approach to social spheres makes it difficult to see the conflicted, ideologically charged, and geographically fragmented nature of the institutions that have accompanied Fordist and post-Fordist capitalism across different regions of the world.

In citing Bourdieu and Harvey earlier, the implicit suggestion has been that Critical Theory can usefully refer to and indeed perhaps seek to emulate, to the extent that it falls within its own brief, substantive accounts of the mechanisms of contemporary state institutions. In the conclusion of this chapter, I would like to suggest one other area where Critical Theory might usefully expand its current focus. If we consult the critical literature outside the Frankfurt School tradition, we find accounts that share broadly similar theoretical concerns, even though the authors' methods are different, and that are also able to provide more concrete detail on another crucial aspect of our present predicament.

These are studies that are not strictly speaking in the field of Political Philosophy but contain invaluable lessons for theorising contemporary politics. They relate institutional aspects of domination and exploitation to transformations in the attempt of the capitalist system to extract surplus value as existing sources of profit become blocked or extinguished. I am thinking of studies that don't just open the "black box" of political

economy as Fraser and Jaeggi enjoin Critical Theory to do once again,⁶⁸ but actually examine what is going on inside the box. In other words, they don't restrict their focus to the *effects* of new modes of production on social spheres and on the life experiences of individuals but seek to describe the workings of new capitalistic processes.

In doing so, these kinds of accounts shed light on contemporary transformations that current Critical Theory has difficulties in discussing: notably, the rise of platform capitalism.⁶⁹ In view of accounts such as these, it seems that if contemporary Critical Theory wants to be in a position to fulfil its project in all of its scope, it needs to rediscover a mode of analysis it has abandoned since Habermas embraced systems theory to describe the workings of the economy: namely a critique of political economy that focuses specifically on the mechanisms of value-extraction. This kind of analysis seems indispensable not just for descriptive purposes, if one is to keep track of the pathologies and injustice arising out of the new organisation of capitalism, but also in terms of the political responses that would be required to offset the damages it incurs. These political responses do not just involve discussion of institutional design, notably of the transnational policies that will have to be implemented if globalised value-chains and capital flows are somehow to be regulated. They also involve reintroducing some struggle in economic theory, since the latter is a key factor in the current political paralysis affecting societies as they fail to formulate collective responses to the looming environmental disaster.

Notes

1. Cf. Horkheimer (1993c).
2. Cf. Habermas (1987).
3. Cf. Deranty (2011) on Axel Honneth's integrated approach in this regard.
4. See Horkheimer (1993b).
5. Cf. Honneth (1996), Fischbach (2009), Jaeggi and Celikates (2017).
6. Cf. Marcuse (1988), Horkheimer (1973), and Genel (2013: 237–249).
7. Horkheimer (2002a: 54–59).
8. Cf. Fraser and Jaeggi (2018: 193–215).
9. Horkheimer (2002b: 217).
10. Cf. Adorno (1993: 30), Horkheimer (1993a: 270–271), Marcuse (1983: 148–149).
11. See Habermas (1990).
12. Cf. Marcuse (1969), Fraser and Jaeggi (2018: 165–192).
13. Held (1980: 29–31).
14. See Honneth (2016).
15. Cf. Abromeit (2011: 92–110).
16. Horkheimer (1993a: 323).
17. Cf. Wood (1981).
18. See Abromeit (2011: 174–175), on Horkheimer.
19. Cf. Hammer (2006: 12, 112), for Adorno.

20. Cf. Fischbach (2009) and Jaeggi (2018).
21. Cf. EPR: §163; Adorno (1993: 8).
22. Cf. Fraser and Jaeggi (2018: 120–127).
23. Honneth (1995: 179).
24. Fraser (2010: 145).
25. Habermas (1996).
26. Cf. Forst (2007).
27. Cf. Jaeggi (2018).
28. See Hammer (2006), Mariotti (2016).
29. Honneth (2014: 42–62).
30. Cf. Honneth (2000).
31. EPR: §21.
32. Cf. Honneth (1996), Jaeggi and Celikates (2017: 14).
33. Namely EPR: §277.
34. See a recent reprise in Honneth (2014: 55).
35. Cf. Neuhauser (2014).
36. See Deutscher and Lafont (2017).
37. See, for instance Jaeggi (2017) on pathologies of work.
38. See a recent reprise in Honneth (2014: 2).
39. See Wood (1990), Fraser and Jaeggi (2018: 124–126).
40. TCA II: 394.
41. BFN: 57.
42. See, for instance the confusing statements about whether injustice matters in the critique of capitalism in Fraser and Jaeggi (2018: 125).
43. Horkheimer (2002b: 215).
44. Ibid., p. 221. See also the many references to injustice in Abromeit (2011).
45. Typically, Harvey (2005).
46. Cf. Horkheimer (1973).
47. One might cite also as a recent counter-example, the impressive analysis deployed by Fraser in conversation with Jaeggi (2018).
48. Cf. Fraser and Jaeggi (2018: 37–39).
49. Cf. Honneth (2016: 51–75).
50. See de Boer (2013) along those lines.
51. Honneth (2014: 328).
52. Cf. Jaeggi (2017: 66–73).
53. Marx (1973: 104).
54. Marx (1990: 283–290).
55. Typically, Fraser and Honneth (2003: 256–265).
56. Cf. Honneth (2014: 15–17).
57. Marx (1990: 280).
58. MM: §6; Hammer (2006: 160–161).
59. See Forst (2007: 258–259).
60. Cf. Anderson (1999).
61. Cf. Honneth (1995: 112).
62. Anderson (1999: 313).
63. Ibid.
64. See also Anderson (2010).
65. Cf. Cohen (2008).
66. Cf. Cohen (2008).
67. Cf. Cohen (2009).
68. Fraser and Jaeggi (2018: 9).
69. See Srnicek (2017), Casilli (2019).

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10 Hegelian Political Economy in the Frankfurt School

Friedrich Pollock

Christopher Yeomans and Jessica Seamands

Introduction

Our chapter is an attempt to trace a thread from Hegel to the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory that is a bit different than the one usually articulated. On the standard story, Hegel's primary contribution to Critical Theory is methodological, through his introduction of the practice of immanent critique. But he ruins his own insight by simply resolving the tensions that make such critique possible in an excessively political and affirmative doctrine of absolute spirit.¹ Hegel's conceptual machinery for identifying and learning from those tensions must then be reoriented by Marx's "Copernican" historical materialist turn, so to speak, specifically his focus on economics, in order to generate the Critical Theory of Society.

That this story gets something right is beyond doubt. In particular, early programmatic works in Frankfurt School Critical Theory specifically propose a critique of political economy.² Furthermore, Hegel is a clear advocate for the kind of reconciliation that is the target of the motivating criticism.³ However, this story crucially occludes something as well, precisely where it comes to political economy, and specifically a particular continuity in the treatment of political economy between Hegel and the Frankfurt School. Hegel was, of course, quite a critic of the political economy of his time, but also a political economist in his own right. He did think that at his time politics trumped economics, which is, of course, the inverse of Marx's view – but the inverse of a view of Marx's which was a view onto a later society much more economically advanced. The relation between politics and economics as social factors must itself be historically contingent on any plausible version of either political economy or Critical Theory. And, in fact, the foremost political economist among the first generation of the Frankfurt School, Friedrich Pollock, came to the conclusion that the new planned economies of the mid-twentieth century were distinctive in part because they were systems in which the significance of politics eclipsed that of economics.

In what follows, we will start with a brief general discussion of political economy – a field that has in many respects ceased to exist. We will then isolate three features of its Hegelian version that are specifically relevant for the Frankfurt School: (i) its concerns for institutional design and function rather than the conditions for revolutionary change; (ii) its complex interconnections between three different types of functions (personal, economic, and political); and (iii) its concern for the variety of ways in which an institution or institutional norm can be said to be actual or valid in a society.⁴ All three of these features have analogues within Pollock's political economy, which we articulate in two different phases of his career: first, the inter-war writings on state capitalism; and second, the post-war writings on automation.

I(a)

What Is Political Economy?

Political economy as an academic subject emerged in the late eighteenth century, although the general inquiries underlying the discipline have been traced back to the moral philosophies of Greek and scholastic philosophers. The mercantilists, physiocrats, and cameralists of the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries brought these issues to the forefront of political discussions, prompting Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and other classical economists to respond and consequently establish political economy as an academic discipline: a comprehensive analysis of the dynamic relationship between the economic system, the government, and the citizens of a nation.

A critical economic development occurred in the seventeenth century with the replacement of the feudal system with early capitalist structures and the rise of mercantilism, which equated a nation's welfare with its ownership of precious metals. The mercantilists were the first to recognise the possibility of an objective economic analysis. Meanwhile, physiocracy in agrarian France, although short-lived, successfully produced the first systematic approach to economics with the *Tableau Economique* and also emphasised the value of a *laissez-faire* economy.

Largely in reaction to mercantilism and the Industrial Revolution, classical economists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries provided the first comprehensive systems of political economy, the most famous of which was found in Adam Smith's 1776 *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith's work focused on productivity, the division of labour, and free trade as the main promoter of national wealth. Shortly after, David Ricardo, who accused Smith of confusing the concepts of labour and wages, adopted a more "metaphysical" approach, seeking comprehensive definitions for value and profit, and proposing an early version of Marx's labour theory

of value in his 1817 *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*. Adam Ferguson, whose theories greatly influenced Smith's, stressed the division of labour as a means for the expansion of commerce and societal progress. The first great philosopher to be influenced by these economic works was Hegel. Hegel's analysis of the intersection of economy, politics, and the personal experience of social was revolutionary in its attention to the latter as an equally significant element in the study of political economy. Marx critiqued Hegel's account while simultaneously affirming Hegel's insistence on the relevance and importance of the social individual as a critical aspect within any successful political economic framework.

In the late nineteenth century, the broad theoretical approach of political economy was essentially abandoned and replaced with narrower subject fields such as economics, sociology, political science, and international relations. It was not until the second half of the twentieth century that the holistic discipline was revived, in part due to the influence of philosophical Marxist thought.

I(b)

What Is Hegelian Political Economy?

Hegelian political economy has three distinctive features: it is concerned with institutional design and function, rather than being concerned with the conditions for revolutionary change; it traces the complex interconnections between three different types of functions (personal, economic, and political); and it focuses on the variety of ways in which an institution or institutional norm can be said to be actual or valid in a society. Let us take these up in order.

(i) *Institutional Design*

Here one cannot begin without acknowledging the pioneering work of Manfred Riedel. Riedel saw quite clearly the way in which Hegel offered a *post-revolutionary* theory of political economy. As Riedel puts it, the political role of Hegel's economic institutional design (the estates and the corporations) was "to negate the division between civil and political life which began during the French Revolution, while at the same time it incorporates the economic revolution arising in England".⁵

Hegel's political economy is in the business of institutional design. In the specific sense of the German term "*Verfassung*", he is interested in the constitution of Germany in two senses: the actually existent social structure and the written laws that would give expression to that structure. Hegel is not so much interested in formulating abstract political

principles. What few abstract principles one finds in the *Philosophy of Right* are the exceptions that prove the rule. For example, the prescriptive *Rechtsgebot* – “be a person and respect others as persons” (EPR: §36) – generates the usual property and contract rights, but these play only a subordinate role in the legitimation of political authority and almost no role in the articulation of the justice of families or even economic associations.⁶ More strikingly, Hegel’s definition of the highest good manages to be both overcomplicated and oversimplified:

The good is the *Idea*, as the unity of the *concept* of the will and the *particular* will, in which abstract right, welfare, the subjectivity of knowing, and the contingency of external existence, as *self-sufficient for themselves*, are superseded; but they are at the same time *essentially contained* and *preserved* within it. . . . [The good is] *realised freedom, the absolute and ultimate end of the world*.

(EPR: §129)

Like “Absolute Knowing”, the conclusion of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, this is less a clearly defined new doctrine than a characterisation of how one ought to view the earlier doctrines and principles. At best, this suggests the possibility of operational definitions of the good against the background of particular conditions. Hegel is thus decidedly in the business of *non-ideal* theory. Instead, Hegel is interested in what institutions *do*: *what they try to do, what they are doing, and how they might be structured to do that better*. In these discussions, he is always cognisant of the fact that actual social institutions serve multiple functions.

Take, for example, his discussion in EPR: §180 of inheritance law as it relates to the family. Here, the questions are whether the resources of the family should be held together and passed down to successive generations (or to one member of the successive generation), or whether an individual property owner within the family should have testamentary freedom to give his or her property to others outside of the family. These questions have to be answered, Hegel thinks, by turning to the purposes served by the goods of the family. On the one hand, they are property (*Eigentum*), which for Hegel means that they serve the purpose of giving the *individual* subject’s will a controllable existence in the external world. But, on the other hand, they are resources (*Vermögen*), which means that they serve the longer-term symbolic and material interests of the family, namely stability, protection against emergencies, and the education of children. Furthermore, these symbolic and material resources give the head of household the requisite independence to play an active political role in both civil society and the state. Similarly, the family serves both the function of allowing for the expression of individual and subjective feelings of love *and* the function of providing a stable context within which children can mature and leave the family to become independent

members of civil society. The right decision on inheritance law – allowing the free disposition of a small amount of personal property, but requiring primogeniture for agricultural property – depends on balancing these concerns, to ensure that the multiple functions of the institution continue to be served by it.

Importantly, Hegel's investigations of political economy proceed against the backdrop of these two successful revolutions (the French political and the English economic), whereas Marx's investigations proceed against the backdrop of the same *successful economic* revolution and the *failed political* revolution of 1848. For this reason, Marx's political economy looks forward to an unknown future after a successful political revolution yet to come, whereas Hegel's political economy looks to the *present economic revolution* against the backdrop of the *political revolution of the recent past*. That political revolution includes not only the French Revolution, but also its proximate result in Germany: the downfall of the Holy Roman Empire with its 200+ constituent entities and its replacement by the German Confederation of much larger but fewer states. As Hegel notes, one cannot simply cite earlier (pre-revolutionary) social forms and assume their current validity, thinking

that Germany is still a state today only because it once was a state, and because those forms whose inner life has [now] departed are still with us. . . . The organization of that body known as the German constitution took shape in a life quite different from that which later invested it and does so now. . . . If these laws have lost their former life, the vitality of the present age has not managed to express itself in laws.

(“The German Constitution”)⁷

The importance of both institutional design and post-revolutionary context is quite clear in the case of the main economic institutions Hegel discusses, namely the estates and the corporations, and their relation to the state. As Christopher Yeomans has argued elsewhere, Hegel's doctrine of the estates is an attempt to repurpose an older institution for new times – to find the spirit that animates those forms now and the laws that would express that life.⁸ This is an attempt that is a philosophical expression of exactly what the Stein-Hardenberg reforms of the post-Napoleonic era were doing in actual Prussian politics.⁹ Though in the long run, it is true that the estates system did not play exactly the function laid out for it by Hegel, it nonetheless played a more durable role than one might have expected. Since even the most reformist states found that system impossible to eliminate, it was largely codified in laws that transformed the estates from quasi-political power hierarchies into civil professional associations. This is quite close to Hegel's institutional design, to the principles of which we now turn.

(ii) Personal, Economic, and Political Functions

There is, of course, a theoretical principle at the heart of Hegel's institutional design. This principle is the oversimplified part of the statement of the highest good quoted previously, namely that the good is "*realised freedom*". It is a unique feature of Hegel's theory of freedom (or self-determination) that it has a tripartite form:¹⁰ (a) at the *logical level*, freedom must have the form of the Concept: universality, particularity, and individuality. (b) At the level of *individual agency*, freedom involves three activities: self-appropriation, specification of content, and effectiveness. (c) And at the level of institutions (*Sittlichkeit* or "ethical life"), these projects become economic, personal, and political functions. To explain this in greater detail, we think it would be helpful to rehearse the general main argument of Hegel's *Logic*.

The main argument of Hegel's *Logic* is that any adequate account of anything whatsoever has to centre on the dialectical interrelation of the categories of universality, particularity, and individuality. Crucially, Hegel is not claiming that there are three *kinds of things* – universals, particulars, and individuals – rather, he is committed to the claim that there are three aspects of every thing that have to be dialectically taken up in order to see the thing in its completeness. One can then pursue many other investigations, e.g. in practical philosophy, secure in the knowledge that one can find universal, particular, and individual aspects to whatever one is investigating.

When it comes to the free will, which Hegel understands as an activity rather than power or disposition, the universal, particular, and individual aspects of that activity take the form of three component activities that the agent is always doing at the same time. Hegel introduces these three component activities in the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* (§§25–6), but he never comes to a consistent vocabulary for describing these activities. We have taken to calling them "self-appropriation", "specification of content", and "effectiveness".¹¹ When *S* is appropriating or taking possession of themselves, *S* grasps their actions as they relate to their identity *qua* an agent. At the most general level, this is *S*'s identity as a moral agent subject to universal principles. When *S* apologises for a moral failing, *S* takes possession of the action for which *S* apologises, and the subject that takes possession is the subject *qua* moral agent. But, even at more specific levels, *S* relates actions to themselves in virtue of *determinate yet general types* (citizen, retiree, nurse, etc.). Thus, self-appropriation is the universal activity of the free will.

However, to act freely also means doing something *specific*. *S* needs to decide what particular action is required by even the most universal rules, and *S* must decide what they like and what objects satisfy those desires. This is the aspect of the will's activity that we term "specification of content", and for obvious reasons it is the particular aspect of the will.

Finally, action makes a change in the world, and this requires the ability to organise one's own motivations in the right way to lead to the required action, but also the ability to judge and organise the world in the right way so that the action has the desired effect. We refer to this aspect of freedom as "effectiveness", which in Hegel's logical schema is the individual aspect of the will. To freely act requires that one be able simultaneously to take possession of oneself, to specify the content of one's will, and to be effective. But this is a very general theory of freedom that is supposed to be valid for the entire range of human practical matters, from personal friendships to moral responsibility to social institutions. When it comes to social institutions, Hegel thinks that these general aspects can be *even* further specified. Let us begin in reverse order.

The effectiveness of the will corresponds to the political function of social institutions. Social institutions are goal-directed systems of norms, so they aim at developing certain means (the norms) to a certain end. This involves successful leadership of participants towards the adoption of well-chosen norms. Though sometimes a disastrous attempt is made to start from scratch and impose entirely new norms (e.g. China's Cultural Revolution), for the most part this adoption of norms can only take the form of the modification or reordering of already existing norms.

The specification of the will's content corresponds to the personal function of social institutions. In the same way that freedom requires specific objects that satisfy specific needs and desires, freedom requires institutions that generate a very tight connection between their form in specific instances and the needs and desires of the agents in those specific institutions. All of the general platitudes about the importance of the family are irrelevant unless it is also sufficiently malleable to satisfy a range of personal needs, and the partners within it are freely chosen. Even the state, Hegel thinks, cannot be a form of realised freedom unless it can generate in citizens a personal bond of trust (patriotism).

Finally, the self-appropriation of the will corresponds to the economic function of social institutions. Here is the point at which the historical contingency of these levels makes itself apparent. In the feudal order, there would not even be any meaningful distinction between political and economic functions. However, in modern – or at least, *modernising* – economies, the realm in which we take possession of ourselves is primarily economic. It is through our productive activities and relations that we give an account of ourselves. Primarily, this is a result of the centrality of work and consumption to our lived experiences, which means that the general types in terms of which we connect our actions to ourselves tend to be economic. It is only in limit cases that I take ownership of an action as a *moral* action *simpliciter*. A hundred times more frequent are the cases in which I take ownership of an action as renter or employee or car buyer.

To begin applying this schema to political economy, consider the institution of property. As Yeomans has argued elsewhere, modern theories of property have tried to do justice to these three aspects of the institution.¹² Of course, doing justice to the three is perfectly compatible with emphasising one of them as fundamental and most important. To take just the German Idealists, *Kant emphasises the economic, Fichte the political, and Hegel the personal functions of property*. Kant's doctrine is very broad and the best reconstruction of his argument for property is primarily negative – eliminating the notion that there is any sort of thing that could not be owned.¹³ Fichte is primarily interested in the kind of political community that is to be created by the proper distribution of work opportunities. And Hegel is primarily interested in the individual control of personal space that exclusive private property relations provide. Partly, this difference in functions is represented by the different terms that they use. Kant's term is not "property [*Eigentum*]" but "rightful possession [*rechtliche Besitz*]". And Hegel uses "property" only for this personal function, preferring "resources [*Vermögen*]" for the economic function.

To return to Hegel's political economy, the main structures he tries to design are the family, the estates and corporations of civil society, and the state. All three are investigated quite specifically in relation to each other, since what functional roles each needs to play is in part determined by what roles other institutions play or do not play. On a political level, perhaps the best example of this is Hegel's extended discussion of the debates in the Württemberg estates assembly, where his guiding thought is that the change from the Holy Roman Empire to the German Confederation has made Württemberg an independent state in such a way as to radically change the functions of the internal group rights which endured across the change.¹⁴ To take another example, the disentangling of family relations in productive relations changes both the structure of the family itself but also generates new functions for economic institutions. The corporations of civil society thus have personal functions of recognition and support as a kind of "second family".

Much of the work Hegel does with the estates is to remedy a functional failure brought on by the combination of political economic revolutions described earlier by Riedel. He does so by designing a system in which the estates serve multiple political functions: they are social preconditions for the functioning of the legal system, they are forms of direct political participation, and they help to disperse power and thus to prevent tyranny.¹⁵ This is *not* abstract utopian theorising – the estates system was an actual and widespread system of legal forms – but it is a form of theorising that tries to see what sort of function these empty shells could play in a post-revolutionary Germany. The important point is just to see that these estates play (a) a personal role, (b) an economic role, and (c) a political role. They may be primarily economic, but their status as a form of realised freedom depends on their playing all of these roles at least to some extent and being a part of a system in which those roles that it plays minimally are maximally played by other institutions.

(iii) Actuality and Validity

As we already noted previously, the German term for “constitution” (*Verfassung*) has two senses that problematise any simple or positivist conception of the actuality of political structures. “*Verfassung*” means both the actually existent social structure and the written laws that would give expression to that structure. The actual institutions of a society are defined by neither the statistical pattern of given interactions nor the explicit laws defining rights and responsibilities, but rather by a complicated interaction between the two. This is the complexity buried in the infamous *Doppelsatz* that has received so much commentary: “what is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational”. We will not attempt to settle the controversy here, but merely to highlight that *the Doppelsatz announces a theme that is central for all critical theory dedicated to immanent critique, namely the problem of the actuality and validity of institutions*. When Hegel claims that the state he describes is actual and valid, he means something different than “historically existent” in the way that one *ordinarily* understands the term “actual”. After all, the state he describes was a constitutional monarchy which neither Prussia nor most German states were in 1820.

However, it was a live *expectation* for such states, an expectation explicitly stated in the *Bundesakte* that established the German Confederation in 1815. We must also consider the implications of his previously mentioned claim that one can have legal forms whose animating principle has fallen away and for which a new principle must be found. Of course, much of this is connected to Hegel’s *Logic*, and in particular to his notion of the Idea. We will not explore this theme in any detail, except to raise it as a problem that must be solved or at least addressed by any critical theory committed to *immanent critique*. By “immanent critique”, we understand a critique of social and political arrangements that appeals to values and norms that are in some sense already *valid* and to structures and possibilities that are in some sense already *actual* in the society which is subject to the critique. But the operative senses of these terms are important, and furthermore shift given the circumstances and needs of the investigation itself.

II(a)**Political Economy in the Frankfurt School: Friedrich Pollock***“State Capitalism”*

In this section, we discuss Pollock’s important work on political economy in the 1930s, from “The Contemporary Situation of Capitalism” in 1932 to “State Capitalism” and “Is National Socialism a New Order?” in 1941. In this work, Pollock produces a history of capitalism with three stages: *competitive capitalism, monopoly capitalism, and state capitalism*.¹⁶ In

the following section, we take up his post-war work, particularly *Automation*. Since so much of Pollock's work remains unjustly neglected, we have taken the liberty of quoting Pollock extensively, and sometimes at length.

(i) *Institutional Design*

The first primary theme in Pollock's institutional design has to do with the historical context of economic institutions. In many respects, Pollock's sense of his historical moment is similar to Marx's in 1848: the conditions for revolutionary change had been present in post-war Europe yet the change was not forthcoming.¹⁷ Pollock, however, comes to see that there was a change, and indeed a substantial change generating a new economic system. However, that new system was not socialism, but rather what Pollock called *state capitalism*. As he writes:

To summarise: all basic concepts and institutions of capitalism have changed their function; interference of the state with the structure of the old economic order has by its sheer totality and intensity 'turned quantity into quality,' transformed monopoly capitalism into state capitalism. (Pollock 1941a: 445)

"State capitalism" denotes an economic system which retains private ownership and even the profit motive, though both ownership and profit come to have completely different functions in the context of production driven by government-planning rather than exclusively by the market. Part of what Pollock is doing is looking backwards to *diagnose* the actual form of the change that produced this unexpected economic form, and part of what he is doing is looking forward by constructing a concept of this new form (an ideal type in Weber's sense) that will suggest what its possibilities are. Looking forward, he is particularly interested in the possibilities of democratic, as opposed to totalitarian, political control of the economic system. Looking backwards, the suddenness of the change requires that we improve our understanding of the conditions that produced it: "[w]hen it became evident that the old system was no longer workable, the new one sprang into being with that incredible ease which can be understood only when we recognise the preceding decades as preparatory to it".¹⁸

These conditions are developed in the shell of the old society that make the new possible. For example, Pollock argues that the very calculative methods of control developed by large modern industries and financial organisations give a political character to economic activity that is then ripe for the fully political character given to it by the state. This is a specific example of a more general phenomenon:

No social system is static. A continuous change daily alters the structure of society. Such changes may not be at once apparent.

They may be hidden particularly because the institutions remain unchanged while their functions change. The legal institution of property, for instance, has remained unchanged for centuries – yet the social function of property today radically differs from previous periods.

(Pollock 1941a: 441)

This introduces a second primary theme of Pollock's institutional design, which is the discovery of new functions for old institutions, which change their nature while retaining their form. There are many of examples of this, even in Pollock's rather brief writings from the period. Beginning with property, Pollock argues that the property right has been changed from having the function of protecting *control of the enterprise* in which capital is invested to that of guaranteeing a *return on investment* (i.e. merely a rent). In the 1930s, Pollock saw this potential present in the actualisation of the complete presuppositions for a planned economy, but restricts himself to the claim that a planned economy is compatible with property ownership so long as the right to income (a rent) is primary to property rather than the right of disposal. But at that point he doubts that the *political conditions* for long-term maintenance of this form of property rights have been satisfied, if indeed they exist: "[h]owever there is yet to be a social order that has managed to maintain itself in which rents are drawn at society's cost without any visible service in return".¹⁹ Nonetheless in the early 1940s, Pollock sees this development as more or less completed, most dramatically under National Socialism but also in other advanced economies.²⁰

This is also the case for law, which now has the one-sided function of ensuring technical rationality rather than constituting the two-sided rules by which both ruler and ruled were governed. As Pollock argues, "[l]aw in Nazi Germany presents a striking example of functional changes. Many of the old legal institutions are still working and still applying time-honored formulas. The staff of the Ministry of Justice is unchanged. . . . Yet, factually, nothing has been left of the old order of things besides the façade".²¹ It is also true of the family:

The family in Nazi Germany is in full disintegration, deprived of all of its former functions. It can no longer protect the individual economically. Words carelessly used in front of one's own children may lead to disaster. Education has passed completely into the hands of the party, and even the family's monopoly on legitimate procreation has been broken. The destruction of the cornerstone of modern society, the family, may prove more convincingly than any other single argument that a New Social Order is being built in Nazi Germany.

(Pollock 1941a: 449)

Finally, to return to economic factors, this is also true of prices, where profits will continue to be earned by producers of the goods that are priced, but they will cease to direct investment:²²

Prices are no longer allowed to behave as masters of the economic process but are administered in all important sections of it. This follows from the principle of planning and means that in favor of a planned economy the market is deprived of its main function. It does not mean that prices cannot exist any longer, but that if they do they have thoroughly changed their character.

(Pollock 1941b: 204)

In all of these cases – property, law, family, and prices – an institution continued as a (written) legal form with normative validity, while the social actuality that underlies that form changed completely and thus changed the content of the norms which remained valid.

Sometimes (as with property), Pollock takes on the Hegelian challenge of discovering *the new function of old institutions*. However, Pollock also saw the challenge of discovering *the old function of new institutions*. This is a third main theme in his institutional design. We already saw one example earlier in Pollock's discussion of the family, which is the transfer of the education function from the family to the party. Pollock's most important example, however, is that now the function of directing the economy was played not by the market but by the administrative state:

Such central steering of the whole economy leads to the actual disappearance of the market as the steering wheel of production. It is not only that many prices have been frozen. Even where fluctuations of prices are still permitted, prices can no longer serve as signals for increasing or curtailing production.

(Pollock 1941a: 445)

But this means that old functions played by the market must now be played by the state, and so looking forward, one can judge the possible outlines of state capitalism by reference to how it might play those roles: “[i]f the market system is to be replaced by another organisational form, the new system must perform certain functions which are necessarily connected with the division of labour. In broadest terms, these “necessary” functions fall into three groups: coordination of needs and resources; direction of production; and distribution”.²³ Thus, rather than being committed to either a Marxist reluctance to offer any glimpse of the future or to a Marxist confidence in the end result of the historical process, Pollock offers a way to evaluate the near future and the potential for likely developments.

In fact, the replacement of the market by the state is not merely a paradigmatic example but rather the central revolutionary phenomenon. Just as Hegel holds that the shift of Württemberg from a duchy within the Holy Roman Empire to a state within the German Confederation is a shift that cascades down into changes of the meaning of many other rights and norms that appear to be internal to Württemberg, Pollock argues that the shift in economic direction from the market to the state changes the functions of all of these other institutions as it redistributes the functions that those institutions previously fulfilled when they oriented themselves by reference to the market. We can helpfully describe some of the major shifts by returning to our taxonomy of personal, economic, and political functions.

(ii) *Personal, Economic, Political Functions*

The primary phenomenon here is a shift in primacy from the economic to the political functions, which cascades down to a change in the way the other functions are played. The shift in the primacy of the economic function to the political function is itself a result of the phenomenon we have just been describing, namely the shift from the market to the state as the primary institution serving that economic function. Once the state is responsible for the three tasks Pollock lays out relating to the division of labour, then the real action is in how the state is to make decisions relating to those tasks:

The genuine problem of a planned society does not lie in the economic but in the political sphere, in the principles to be applied in deciding what needs shall have preference, how much time shall be spent for work, how much of the social product shall be consumed and how much used for expansion, etc. Obviously, such decisions cannot be completely arbitrary but are to a wide degree dependent upon the available resources.

(Pollock 1941b: 204)

Notice that previously no one *decided* these issues; rather, the market specified *post festum* which investments had been wise and which had been foolish, which labour was productive and which was unproductive. However, the liberal economic sphere which was to be protected from intervention motivated by political interests is now thoroughly penetrated by such interests and the plans developed along those lines. Of course, historically, this is something like regression to the mean. We now know that the liberal phase of capitalism is a great outlier in the history of economic systems, and many since the 1960s have spoken of a re-feudalisation of the economy.²⁴ This shift then

reorganises the relations of dependence between economic, personal, and political status:

Social power, prestige, and honour now depend decisively upon one's place in the government and party hierarchies. The relation between property, income, and social power has thus been radically altered. Money alone gives only limited power or (as in the case of the Jews) no power at all. Political power, in turn, which is equivalent to the control of the means of production, may become the source of practically unlimited income.

(Pollock 1941a: 443)

This is what allows the planned economy to overcome the barrier to its possibility noted previously, namely that it reduces capitalists to rentiers.²⁵ The party hierarchy gives the capitalist an alternative route to power and with it the ability to increase income, even if direct disposition over their capital is no longer possible. However, that route to income will be somewhat different in the totalitarian and democratic versions of state capitalism, and this difference generates one reason to expect that democratic versions are more likely to be economically efficient. To quote Pollock on this subject:

Since totalitarian state capitalism is the expression of an antagonistic society at its worst, the will to dominate from above and the counter-pressure from below cut deeply into the pseudo-liberty of the state capitalist planners. The planning board, while vested with all the technical means for directing the whole economic process, is itself an arena of struggle among social forces far beyond its control. It will be seen that planning in an antagonistic society is only in a technical sense the same tool as that used by a society in which harmony of interests has been established.

(Pollock 1941b: 219)

Thus far, we have primarily discussed the reversal of the political and economic functions, but this reversal also changes the personal functions of institutions as well. Specifically, this shift changes both the nature of interpersonal interactions and the relations between individuals and groups. It changes interpersonal interactions because it changes the personae actors primarily inhabit in their most important relations with each other:

Under private capitalism all social relations are mediated by the market; men meet each other as agents in the exchange process, as buyers or sellers. The source of one's income, the size of one's property are decisive for one's social position. The profit motive keeps the

economic mechanism of society moving. Under state capitalism men meet each other as commander or commanded; the extent to which one can command or has to obey depends in the first place upon one's position in the political set-up and only in a secondary way upon the extent of one's property. . . . Another aspect of the changed situation under state capitalism is that the profit motive is superseded by the power motive.

(Pollock 1941b: 207)

As we described Hegel's view, self-appropriation tracks the economic function. However, we emphasised that this was historically contingent. Such a mapping makes sense for the nineteenth century and is even somewhat anticipatory for Hegel writing in the 1820s. Nevertheless, the shift from the market to the state as the most important institution changes the mapping because it changes the terms in which we give an account of ourselves, which are now political. This then means that the dominant orientation for how we make the specific, personal choices that we do is power rather than profit.²⁶ This change also changes the personal relationship of individual to groups, since power is essentially a group dynamic whereas profit is a matter of the individual. However, this makes the future-directed question of whether state capitalism is as amenable to democratic control as it is to autocratic control even more important. And this future-directed question is further heightened by Pollock's view that there is nothing inherently unstable about state capitalism: "[f]orewarned as we are, we are unable to discover any inherent economic forces, "economic laws" of the old or a new type, which could prevent the functioning of state capitalism".²⁷

(iii) Actuality and Validity

Finally, though we have already broached the theme a few times with respect to the purposing of capitalist institutions, let us go into further detail about the differing senses of actuality and validity. An important point to make here is that the requirement of immanence here is flexible, responsive to the basic political purpose of theoretical analysis: "[t]he pressing need to know where the journey is going makes the merely probable character of such prognoses seem the lesser evil as compared to the resigned 'ignoramus'".²⁸ In "State Capitalism", we get an extensive methodological orientation:

In regard to the method of this study the following points ought to be emphasised. Whether such a thing as state capitalism exists or can exist is open to serious doubt. It refers here to a model that can be constructed from elements long visible in Europe and, to a

certain degree, even in America. Social and economic developments in Europe since the end of the first world war are interpreted as transitional processes transforming private capitalism into state capitalism. The closest approach to the totalitarian form of the latter has been made in National Socialist Germany. Theoretically the totalitarian form of state capitalism is not the only possible result of the present process of transformation. It is easier, however, to construct a model for it than for the democratic form of state capitalism to which our experience gives us few clues. One of our basic assumptions is that 19th century free trade and free enterprise are on the way out. Their restoration is doomed for similar reasons as was the attempt to restore feudalism in post-Napoleonic France. The totalitarian form of state capitalism is a deadly menace to all values of western civilization. Those who want to maintain these values must fully understand the possibilities and limitations of the aggressor if their resistance is to meet with success. Furthermore, they must be able to show in what way the democratic values can be maintained under the changing conditions. If our assumption of the approaching end of the era of private capitalism is correct, the most gallant fight to restore it can only lead to a waste of energy and eventually serve as a trailblazer for totalitarianism.

(Pollock 1941b: 200)²⁹

The point here is that the actuality Pollock attempts to describe is a complicated and dynamic system of tendencies, rather than a static set of fixed patterns. What counts as actual or valid for the former is quite different from what would so count for the latter. In particular, what is actual relates more to the range of possibilities for development in the near future and the impossibility of turning back the clock to prior economic forms than it does to a clearly settled institutional structure in the present. What is actual is a model that specifies a range of potential future developments, and what is valid are functional expectations generated by the shifting roles played by these new institutions. There is no valid expectation of a respect for private property in the nineteenth century, but there is a valid expectation of democratic control of the state as an economic institution.

II(b)

“Automation”

Here, out of necessity, we must be brief, but a discussion of Pollock’s political economy should also include his work from the 1950s and particularly *Automation: A Study of its Economic and Social Consequences*.

Pollock's assessment of the phenomenon of automation seeks answers regarding the effects of this new method of production through the lens of political economy.

(i) *Institutional Design*

As we previously argued, Hegel uses the recent history of political revolution as a backdrop against which he studies the present economic revolution. Pollock is engaged in the same project within respect what he terms the "second industrial revolution" of automation: "[t]hese technical and social changes represent something more than a step by step development from the old to the new. They have produced something 'new' in a qualitative as well as in a 'quantitative' sense. It is this aspect of modern change in industry and society which justifies the use of the term 'second industrial revolution'".³⁰ Pollock is in a different historical position from Hegel, however, because he can draw analogies with other recent economic revolutions, namely the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century as well as the rationalisation (or efficiency) movement, which he identifies as the precipitator of automation. By researching and analysing the economic and social consequences of these periods, Pollock draws conclusions regarding predictable short-term effects of automation and provides suggestions for how the state may help to ease those effects through deliberate, paced implementation and a planned economy.

Pollock is also constantly keeping in mind the relative power of industry versus organised labour. Furthermore, Pollock's investigation, like Hegel's, is not concerned with identifying the conditions for revolutionary change. On the contrary, Pollock hopes to propose measures that will protect and further *reinforce* the stability of a nation's economy should it choose to implement automation as a primary mode of production. *Pollock's and Hegel's aims are not revolutionary, but diagnostic and precautionary.* Whereas a revolutionary account would likely endorse the potentially disruptive capabilities of automation and its implications on the political economy of a nation, Pollock aims to identify the potentially problematic characteristics of automation for the purpose of proposing adjustments that might aid in a nation's ability to absorb the transitional shock. In fact, most of the consequences of automation that concern Pollock have to do with destabilising changes in the labour force.

(ii) *Personal, Economic, and Political Functions*

Given that Pollock's understanding of "social consequences" involves both personal and political considerations, the work's title alone (*Automation: A Study of its Economic and Social Consequences*) demonstrates an interconnected tripartite analysis reminiscent of Hegel's dedication to three distinct types of functions. Pollock's analysis of trade unions echoes

Hegel's study of how the economic, personal, and political interests and functions elucidate the potentiality for realised freedom within estates as social institutions. Of course, the economic function of automation dominates the book through discussion of various consequences ranging from trade unions' negotiations of guaranteed wage systems,³¹ to comparisons between the workers' previous "soul-destroying routine jobs" and the features of the anticipated occupations that await them in an automated industry, including increased leisure time.³² But the political function of automation is also stressed throughout: Pollock advocates government-sponsored education training programmes to assist displaced workers in adjusting to new types of jobs and critiques the future viability of trade unions in an age in which the strike, the trade-unionists' most powerful weapon, loses its ability to disrupt the activities of automatic plants.³³ Furthermore, Pollock presciently argues that the likely unemployment resulting from automation is a breeding ground for authoritarian regimes.

However, what is most interesting about Pollock's analysis, and most thoroughly Hegelian, is the way he explores the personal consequences of automation for the agency and dispositions of workers. Pollock's analysis particularly highlights the way that specifying the content of work as the maintenance and supervision of automated processes changes the relevant forms of self-appropriation and efficacy. In discussing how automation may affect an engineer as opposed to a semi-skilled or un-skilled worker, Pollock predicts a new social hierarchy in which engineers and technicians hold dominating roles in industry that place them alongside managers within a powerful minority. In terms of self-appropriation, Pollock's discussion features the predicted heightening of engineers' work attire from overalls to suits and the need for managers to adjust their personalities by internalising company values and beliefs, and identifying "body and soul" with their organisation.³⁴ In terms of effectiveness, Pollock discusses the concern that the inability to measure the results of workers' efforts may contribute to dissatisfaction with their work and the general concern that an employee's experience with a company's processes over the long term no longer makes that employee valuable.

These themes are then combined in an analysis of the social structure generated by this form of work:

All these changes [induced by automation] represent a sharpening of trends which have long been evident in advanced industrial societies. For some time there has been a tendency for the labour force to be split into two groups. The first group – a small minority – consists of highly-qualified technicians and administrators who enjoy a social status similar to that of professional men (doctors, lawyers, etc.). The second group – the vast majority – consists of people who have only an elementary education and have not got the brains or the training to understand the workings of either a modern economy or a modern

society. . . . Such a class structure would be a very insecure foundation for a free society. The great power of the minority coupled with the ignorance and weakness of the majority might well lead to the establishment of an authoritarian in place of a democratic form of government.

(Pollock 1956: 226)

Pollock's discussion of this new class distinction brought on by automation is extensive, and one of the themes that connects the backwards- and forwards-looking parts of the book. His thoughts on the sorts of intelligence and personality traits required to succeed in the new hierarchy are of both political and personal significance in addition to their obviously economic importance:

All these employees, from the most senior to the most junior member of the staff, are united in the conviction that they belong to a superior caste of workers. That attitude has much more in common with a totalitarian way of life than with a democratic way of life.

(Pollock 1956: 217)

[T]he way in which engineers think about and act upon the problems of harnessing the forces of nature and the labour of human beings to economic ends will become of ever greater significance in the future. The resulting attitude of mind to both material and spiritual matters coincides with the authoritarian tendencies in all phases of management.

(Pollock 1956: 227)

Although the scope of *Automation* is remarkably broad, Pollock is primarily concerned with realised freedom in his aims to anticipate and prepare for the economic, personal, and political effects of the continued spread of automation. His in-depth analysis of these facets of autonomy lead him to conclude that although the free market may absorb the shocks of automation in the long term, the movement's anticipated immediate effects warrant serious concern, especially regarding the risk of mass unemployment. However, Pollock is surprisingly optimistic that a long-term approach of economic planning aided by new technologies could successfully deliver full automation into a free and democratic society such that a new – and better – social system may emerge in the wake of this second industrial revolution.

(iii) Actuality and Validity

In *Automation*, Pollock looks ahead to the near future against the backdrop of the recent and distant past. That recent past is the rationalisation

movement of the earlier twentieth century, and that distant past is the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century. In both cases, he tries to extrapolate from the social consequences that followed those economic revolutions to the probable consequences of the automation, with a practical eye to avoiding the disastrous effects on workers. He is principally interested in the *model* of automation in the sense he used in the "State Capitalism" essay, namely a paradigm or ideal type constructed out of visible tendencies that connect the realities of the past to the possibilities of the future:

Our attempt to forecast the changes in the social structure which will follow the widespread adoption of automation may perhaps be criticised as useless since we are concerned with future events which cannot be anticipated. Moreover it might be said that, however widely automation may be introduced . . . there will always be a large sector of the economy in which automatic machines cannot be produced. . . . Moreover in the United States the conveyor-belt system was introduced only into those industries which now appear most likely to adopt automation. But it is the conveyor-belt which is the characteristic feature of modern industry. . . . The fact that the introduction of 'rationalised' but boring assembly-line methods in the great industries of today has left its mark on the whole of modern society makes it appear likely that the widespread adoption of automation might well have similar results.

(Pollock 1956: 81–82)

For Pollock, the question of whether automation should be implemented would have been a futile one to ask. Though he concluded that some of its effects would be largely unpredictable, he felt that there was no question that automation would find a foothold in the US (and elsewhere). Hegel and Pollock identified the welfare of individuals as an essential indicator in determining the quality of a nation's political economy. Whereas Adam Smith, for example would have been concerned with automation-induced unemployment because it stifles economic prosperity, Hegel and Pollock would have identified poverty as its most negative consequence. It is not automation's potential effects on a nation's political economy overall, then, but rather its conjectural impact on the individual that interests Pollock. Pollock's treatment of political economy in *Automation* shares with Hegel a semi-historical approach that takes up an analysis of present issues against a backdrop of past movements, an interest in institutional design and function rather than the conditions for revolutionary change, a complex and multifaceted tripartite analysis of individuals and institutions (by investigating the

extent of and potential for economic, personal, and political interests and functions), and, above all, an emphasis on promoting and protecting human freedom.

Notes

1. Horkheimer (2002: 204).
2. Cf. Gangl (2016: 26–27).
3. Cf. Hardimon (1994).
4. Here by “valid” we mean only a general sense of recognised legitimacy and do not mean to appeal to any of the more technical senses given to the term by Habermas.
5. Riedel (1984: 182–183).
6. This is where the concept of “resources” (*Vermögen*) replaces that of “property” (*Eigentum*).
7. *Theorie Werkausgabe* I: 465 and (1999: 9–10). See Avineri (1972: 69–72).
8. See Yeomans (2017).
9. See Koselleck (1967: 73–74).
10. See Yeomans (2015).
11. Alternatively, one could call them “self-appropriation”, “self-determination”, and “self-government”. But since “self-determination [*Selbstbestimmung*]” is Hegel’s general term for freedom, we do not use these three in the context of Hegel interpretation to avoid confusion.
12. See Yeomans (2020).
13. Cf. Westphal (2002).
14. See *Theorie Werkausgabe* IV: 462–597; Hegel (2009: 32–136).
15. See Yeomans (2017).
16. Pollock (1941a: 440).
17. See Brink (2015: 333–334). Of course, it did take place where not expected, namely in Russia.
18. Pollock (1941a: 452).
19. Pollock (1932: 27).
20. Namely Pollock (1941a: 442, 1941b: 210).
21. Pollock (1941a: 448).
22. Namely Pollock (1941a: 446).
23. Pollock (1941b: 203).
24. See Neckel (2010).
25. Namely Pollock (1932: 27).
26. Power is about control of people; profit is about numerical increase. One might give you the other, but in themselves they are different goals.
27. Pollock (1941b: 217).
28. Pollock (1933: 321–322).
29. In a footnote to this passage Pollock argues that “model” is being used in the same sense as Weber’s “ideal type”. Note that Weber first develops the concept of an “ideal type” in the context of methodological reflections on what sort of objectivity is possible in the knowledge of social life that will simultaneously orient us towards the proper solutions to social problems (Weber 2012: 100–101). Nonetheless, Pollock makes no specific use of the notion of the ideal type, so it is not clear that further comparison is useful in understanding Pollock’s view.
30. Pollock (1956: 39).

31. Namely Pollock (1956: 243–244).
32. Namely Pollock (1956: 79).
33. Namely Pollock (1956: 91).
34. Namely Pollock (1956: 226).

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